

**JOHN DEWEY'S THEORY OF INQUIRY: AN INTERPRETATION OF A
CLASSICAL AMERICAN APPROACH TO LOGIC**

A Thesis

by

TROY NICHOLAS DETERS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2006

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee, John J. McDermott
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ABSTRACT

John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry: An Interpretation of a Classical American
Approach to Logic. (May 2006)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. John J. McDermott

During the 20th century, John Dewey introduced a new idea with respect to the nature of logical theory: He presented a portrait of logic as a theory about how organisms interact and maintain an integrated balance between themselves and their environment. He wrote many texts on what he called his theory of inquiry, including *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916), *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903), and *How We Think* (1910). However, the book where he most closely detailed his theory of inquiry is in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938). These texts by Dewey have served as the source for much recent discussion and commentary in Dewey scholarship. Most of these interpretations on Dewey's theory of inquiry, I maintain, misunderstand Dewey in some fundamental way. I argue that these commentators have gone wrong in interpreting Dewey and his works by failing to understand some aspect of his theory of inquiry. I illustrate the flaws in their interpretations and subsequently integrate the conclusions I reach into a single, cohesive perspective on Dewey's account of inquiry. The final chapter presents a new interpretation of Dewey that emphasizes the role of phenomenal, contextual, and social factors in the foundations of his logical works.

To
John J. McDermott –
a brilliant and caring man

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would have been impossible without the constructive criticisms, helpful guidance, and enormous patience from numerous people who have collaborated with me on this project. My gratitude towards them is immense and almost inexpressible.

I would like to first and foremost thank Professor John J. McDermott for everything he has done for me since the beginning of my graduate career in philosophy at Texas A&M. His unending patience with me when I was in need of help and guidance, his continual persistence in pushing me towards completing my projects, and his expressed interest and concern about my work, all have contributed towards my progressing through the program. I have learned a lot about philosophy and life from him, including how to live authentically, how to endure through the most complicated of times, and how to help and show sincere concern for others. The many lessons he has taught me will direct me through life and persist forever. More importantly than being a teacher, Professor McDermott has been my friend and mentor.

Appreciation is also due to my other committee members. My respect and gratitude is due to Dr. George who frequently talked with me and gave me advice and suggestions throughout my studies. He has shown concern about me and pushed me to continue with my work. Furthermore, he was always available, attentive, and helpful. In addition, Professor Erlandson was also always available for me, listened to me, and gave me constructive criticisms on my work. He was generous with his time and patience.

Gratitude must also be given towards those instructors who have contributed to my knowledge, my research background, and my curiosity in pursuing my research in John Dewey's theory of inquiry. Professor McDermott's courses and independent studies in American philosophy have pushed me to pursue excellence in this area. In addition, I have an enormous amount of appreciation and thanks towards Dr. Pappas who gave me constructive criticisms on my ideas and helpful guidance during my first year.

In addition, I would like to thank the many people, so far unmentioned, who have along the way read drafts of my work, given me advice, or talked with or listened to me about ideas related to this thesis. Some of these people include Larry Hickman, Tom Burke, James Campbell, Matthew Foust, Matthew Flamm, Emil Salim, Steve Campbell, and Mark Bernier. Especially, Larry Hickman's helpful advice on some of my earlier work has contributed substantially to parts of this thesis.

Also, thanks to my father, my mother, my brother and sister-in-law, who have always shown immense love and support. All of them have been there to encourage me to pursue my projects and goals, and they will always be dear to me.

Finally, but with equal gratitude, I would like to thank the numerous professors from my undergraduate program at the University of Toledo who nurtured, supported, and encouraged my philosophical pursuits and development, including James Campbell, Estil Canterbury, Matthew Flamm, Madeline Muntersbjorn, Ramakrishna Puligandla, Susan Purviance, Russell Reising, John Sarnecki, and Eric Snider. Their guidance has been an invaluable resource to my academic pursuits.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY AND THE EXPOSITION OF A PURSUIT

Even though John Dewey is not primarily remembered for his research in logical theory (which he also called his theory of inquiry), his work in this field is still significant and relevant enough to concrete practices to be regarded as highly important doctrines. In contrast to most of the formal logic developing during his time-period, Dewey's was developed with the intention of impacting existential affairs. Dewey's account of logic was his *theory* about the process of *inquiry*, where inquiry arises when an organism encounters an indeterminate situation. By examining his concept of inquiry alone, one will see the relevance that it has to organisms and how they interact with common affairs. Thus, logic is a theory that formulates the methods by which an organism gains and maintains control over their environment, not with the subject-predicate analysis of linguistic statements.

Dewey's writings on logic are extensive and occur throughout many of his books. In his *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903), Dewey first develops his account of instrumentalism. Dewey expands on this doctrine in subsequent writings, including in his next major publication in the field of logic, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916).

Here, Dewey discusses the development of his instrumentalism, his views on thought, and his account of propositions and judgments, among other topics. Following this book, Dewey published his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, which he spent over forty years developing. In this book, Dewey details his process of inquiry and how it relates to scientific knowledge.

Understanding Dewey's logic is impossible without examining the historical context of Dewey's work. Most importantly, considering the point that Dewey's research was not similar to Bertrand Russell's and Gottlob Frege's is part of the key to bringing to light a clear picture of Dewey's intentions. In addition, the fact that Dewey's theory of inquiry was strongly influenced by Charles S. Peirce's discussion of inquiry will place Dewey's account within the context of the work taking place in American philosophy during Dewey's own time-period. Instead of discussing how Dewey's logic differs from traditional formal logic or how it relates to accounts developing during his own time-period, I will discuss something different. Rather, I will examine various commentators' interpretations of Dewey, including those developed by Bertrand Russell, Tom Burke, and Douglas Browning.

During Dewey's time-period, the movement of modern day formal logic was becoming a powerful presence. One of the founders of this movement was Frege. Following Frege, Russell made large contributions as well. Dewey, then, was introducing his logical theory, one which grew in opposition to Aristotelian logic, during a time in which Aristotelian logic was influencing modern logic. The acceptance of Dewey's writings, then, did not come with a generous welcome by formal logicians,

including Russell. Instead, Dewey's work underwent significant controversy from Russell's standpoint.

This controversy emerged through correspondence between Russell and Dewey through articles and book chapters. Russell initiated the debate with his publication "Dewey's New *Logic*."¹ Dewey responded to this publication in an essay entitled "Experience, Knowledge, and Value: A Rejoinder."² From this point, the exchanges between the two continued to ensue for several years.

In his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*, Tom Burke examines Dewey's logical theory from the standpoint of the debate that took place between Dewey and Russell. Burke's intention in this book is not to assist Russell in furthering criticisms against Dewey. Rather, it is to clarify Dewey's writings and clear it of some of the confusions and misinterpretations brought forth against it by Russell.

Even though Burke has provided a strong defense of Dewey's theory of inquiry against Russell's criticisms, there is one aspect of his book that is in need of reconsideration. Burke's emphasis on the role of evolution in Dewey is a bit overstated and neglects to take into account other important factors of inquiry for Dewey, including the role of the postulate of immediate empiricism in Dewey's philosophy and the social foundations of inquiry. Without considering these factors, an accurate interpretation of Dewey's logical writings cannot be provided.

Douglas Browning is another author who has contributed substantially to our understanding of Dewey's theory of inquiry. In 1997, Browning delivered a

¹ Bertrand Russell, "Dewey's New *Logic*," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, vol. 1, *The Library of Living Philosophers*, ed., Paul Arthur Schlipp (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1939), 149.

² Tom Burke, *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 8.

presentation entitled “Some Remarks on Burke’s *Dewey’s New Logic*” for the American Philosophical Association. In this paper, Browning provides an assessment and review of Burke’s book. While Browning notes that Burke has provided a first-rate assessment of Dewey’s work and insightfully analyzed the debate that took place between Dewey and Russell, Browning does identify a few major misinterpretations Burke commits. One of the major aspects of Burke’s book that Browning disagrees with is his discussion of situations.

In this thesis, I will closely examine this secondary literature. Even though it is all certainly of first-rate quality, I would still, nevertheless, like to discuss the extent to which it accurately interprets Dewey’s textual writings. The two primary secondary authors’ interpretations of Dewey I will consider include Russell and Burke, each of whom have made substantial contributions to this area of philosophy. However, their readings of Dewey are not without their own errors. Where Russell and Burke have gone wrong in arriving at their delineations of Dewey’s logical writings, I will argue, is that they have each failed to correctly interpret various aspects of it.

Pursuing this thesis will allow the opportunity to not only arrive at a more in-depth analysis of Dewey’s logic, but also to diagnose some of the errors brought forth by other commentators on this topic. The significance and relevance of this thesis to current debates surrounding Dewey’s theory of inquiry is revealed insofar as it attempts to provide a clearer depiction of Dewey’s theory in consideration of recent discussions surrounding it, including the work by Russell, Burke, and Browning.

In pursuing this project, I will rely on multiple sources, some primary and some secondary. To begin Chapter II, I will provide a discussion of the different logical theories that are relevant to the debate that ensued between Dewey and Russell. First, I will discuss Dewey's account of propositions and judgments in order to contrast it with the versions developed by Frege and Russell. In order to delineate Dewey's account, I will rely on his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938). The latter text is where Dewey develops in detail his final writings on logic. I will contrast Dewey's writings on propositions and judgments with those developed by traditional logicians, including Frege and Russell. In order to briefly discuss Frege's work, I will rely on his articles "On Sense and Meaning" and "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry." My discussion of Russell's account will make use of his *Introduction to Mathematical Logic* (1919).

Secondly, after discussing their accounts of propositions and judgments, I will examine in further detail various aspects of Dewey's logical writings in order to assess the accuracy of some of Russell's criticisms. In particular, I will examine in further detail Dewey's discussion of propositions. In order to provide this discussion, I will examine the following sources, "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth," by John Dewey; "Some Remarks on Burke's *Dewey's New Logic*," by Douglas Browning; and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, by John Dewey. After this examination, I will discuss some of the criticisms that Russell directed against Dewey's work. To accomplish this, I will rely on Russell's book chapter "John Dewey," his article "Dewey's *New Logic*," and his book *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. Throughout this process, I will rely on

Tom Burke's book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell* for commentary and insight on various aspects of Dewey.

In Chapter III, I will turn to an examination of Burke's treatment of the debate that took place between Dewey and Russell. Burke develops this discussion in his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*. Thus, in order to present his position on the role of evolution in Dewey's account of situations, I will turn to his writings in Chapter II of his book. While it seems plausible that evolution plays some role in Dewey's thought, in order to be certain about the extent to which the influence is prevalent, I will delineate his discussion in his article "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy."

Upon accomplishing this, I will provide an interpretation of Dewey that emphasizes the experiential and social aspects of inquiry rather than the reductionistic evolutionary account presented by Burke. Burke misinterprets Dewey insofar as he places too much emphasis on the role of physical language. My interpretation will rely on Dewey's "Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" and Chapter III, "The Existential Matrix of Inquiry: Cultural," of his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.

Following this, in Chapter IV I will articulate Douglas Browning's reconsideration of Burke's account of situations. Browning criticizes Burke's account of situations on the grounds that Burke misinterprets Dewey's discussion. Burke conceives of Dewey's notion of a situation to consist of indeterminateness, confusion, doubt, and uncertainty. In short, there is a total breakdown of the functioning of the organism in relation to its environment. Browning presents a different understanding of Dewey's notion of a situation based upon Dewey's discussion as it occurs in his *Logic*. Here,

Dewey seems to attribute to indeterminate situations the traits that Burke attributes to Dewey's presentation of situations. Thus, Burke seems to confuse Dewey's account of situations with his view of indeterminate situations.

Browning presents situations as the qualitative traits of experiences that cannot be captured by any conceptual or cognitive scheme. In this chapter, I will begin by discussing Browning's presentation "Some Remarks on Burke's *Dewey's New Logic*." In doing this, I will also examine various excerpts from Burke's book *Dewey's New Logic* to consider them in light of Browning's discussions. In addition, I will also explore a response that Dewey delivers to Russell's criticisms against him. Some of Dewey's responses to the criticisms brought forth by Russell occur in his "Experience, Knowledge, and Value."

Even though exploring all of these authors' interpretations in greater detail will not exhaust all of the recent scholarship into Dewey's logical writings, it will, nevertheless, present new perspectives on the topics I will consider. Research into this area has undergone substantial contributions from numerous authors in the past century by authors such as Tom Burke, Douglas Browning, Larry Hickman, Ralph W. Sleeper, and H. S. Thayer. All of these authors have provided insightful and creative interpretations of Dewey and his philosophy. Hopefully, in discussing their research in this thesis, I will illustrate the insightfulness and creativity of their work. Finally, just as the aforementioned authors have made contributions to Dewey and his philosophical writings, I hope to do the same by considering their work and presenting my own interpretations on the debates that have ensued since Dewey's first publication on logic.

CHAPTER II

DEWEY ON PROPOSITIONS: THE CRITIQUE OF RUSSELL AND BURKE

John Dewey's logical theory is unique in many respects, which is illustrated most clearly in its divergence from the traditional Frege-Russell development of logic.

Dewey's account is much more broad and encompassing than the theories developed by his predecessors and contemporaries, including Frege and Russell. The role that logical notions play in Russell's, Frege's, and Dewey's theories, such as propositions, truth, warranted assertibility, and judgments, serve to differentiate their accounts of logic from one another.

A serious amount of debate took place between Russell and Dewey about their theories. Throughout much literature on the topic, Russell continued to criticize Dewey for his stances, while Dewey defended himself against those allegations. Russell's primary concern over Dewey's logical writings was not clearly developed, as he did not target a series of criticisms against one single aspect of Dewey's thought. Rather, he targeted criticisms against many different areas. However, Dewey's account of propositions and judgments was an area that Russell gave more attention to relative to other areas of Dewey's work that Russell considered.

Russell's mistake in assessing Dewey's work is that he inserted his own beliefs and theories into his reading of Dewey. Russell believed in the eternal truth or falsity of propositions; they have a definite, timeless truth value.¹ For Dewey, propositions can only be understood in their relation to inquiry, which arises out of an indeterminate

¹ See, for example, Russell (1919), p. 155.

situation. Russell criticized Dewey for not upholding the account of propositions that he held.

In this chapter, I will begin with a discussion of the role that propositions and judgments serve in the theories of Dewey, Frege, and Russell. Doing so will provide for a transition into a taxonomy and analysis of Dewey's different types of propositions. After this discussion, I will argue that context plays an important role in Dewey's analysis of propositions and is a feature of his thought that cannot be neglected. Following this, I will examine a few criticisms that Burke directs against Russell. Afterwards, I will direct a criticism of my own against Russell's interpretation of Dewey's account of propositions based on conclusions I have drawn throughout the essay.

2.1 Propositions and Judgments: Dewey's, Frege's, and Russell's Stances

Propositions and judgments play an important role in both Dewey's and Russell's logical writings. They have their own separate functions, and are treated differently from the perspective of Dewey to Russell, and vice versa. In this section, I will delineate Dewey's, Frege's, and Russell's views on propositions and judgments, and then contrast them.

For Dewey, propositions and judgments have to be understood in relation to their function in inquiry, in terms of their role in bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment. Dewey discusses propositions and judgments in the following text:

Propositions are logically distinct from judgments, and yet are the necessary logical instrumentalities for reaching final warranted determination of judgment. Only by means of symbolization (the peculiar differentia of propositions) can direct action be deferred until inquiry into conditions and procedures has been instituted. The overt

activity, when it finally occurs, is, accordingly, intelligent instead of blind. Propositions as such are, consequently, provisional, intermediate and instrumental.²

This passage reveals a distinction between propositions and judgments. Both play a fundamental role in inquiry. Propositions serve an instrumental and intermediate role in contributing to the establishment of a warrantably assertible judgment. In addition, propositions are carried through by symbols, and, consequently, have no existential import. They are to be understood in the context of bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment.

Judgments are what result from the process of inquiry. Dewey expresses this in Chapter VII, “The Construction of Judgment,” of his *Logic*: “judgment may be identified as the settled outcome of inquiry. It is concerned with the concluding objects that emerge from inquiry in their status of being conclusive.”³ Judgments have existential import; they are concerned with concrete, everyday affairs. Their establishment has an impact on an indeterminate situation; they transform it into one that is stable and characterized by equilibrium. Dewey discusses the process underlying judgments as follows: “Judgment has been analyzed to show that it is a continuous process of resolving an indeterminate, unsettled situation into a determinately unified one, through operations which transform subject-matter originally given.”⁴

Contrary to Dewey’s views, Frege’s and Russell’s positions on propositions and judgments differ in fundamental respects. The influence of Frege’s work on Russell is revealed clearly by examining their texts. For Frege and Russell, the focus of logic is

² John Dewey: The Later Work, 1925-1953, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 12: 1938, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 283.

³ Dewey, *Logic*, 120.

⁴ Dewey, *Logic*, 283.

arriving at truth values. Determining truth values consists of the analysis of propositions to determine their truth or falsity. To begin, I will provide a discussion of Frege's account of propositions. Afterwards, I will discuss Russell's account.

In what ensues, I will provide a brief exegetical interpretation of Frege. Although this will not provide a comprehensive account of Frege's philosophy, I trust that it will provide a representative account of his position on propositions, judgments, and assertions. I acknowledge that Frege's philosophy of logic may be a lot broader than the perspective I will emphasize, but my goal is to present Frege's account just to show that, from a historical perspective, it influenced Russell's stance on propositions and judgments.

The standards set forth by Frege regard propositions as being either true or false. There are only two possible truth values, True or False, and therefore no other possible truth values, as Frege's writings indicate: "We are therefore driven into accepting the *truth-value* of a sentence as constituting what it means. By the truth-value of a sentence I understand the circumstances that it is true or false. There are no other truth-values."⁵ Every proposition has the semantic property of truth or falsity under every context. Frege indicates this clearly in the following text:

Without wishing to give a definition, I call a [proposition] something for which the question of truth arises. So I ascribe what is false to a [proposition] just as much as what is true. So I can say: the [proposition] is the sense of the sentence without wishing to say that the sense of every sentence is a [proposition].... We say a sentence expresses a [proposition].... [T]wo things must be distinguished in an indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question, and the assertion. The former is the [proposition], or at least contains the

⁵ Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Meaning" in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Frege*, eds., Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1952), 63.

[proposition]. So it is possible to express the [proposition] without laying it down as true. Both are so closely joined in an indicative sentence that it is easy to overlook the separability. Consequently we may distinguish:

- (1) the apprehension of a [proposition]—thinking;
- (2) the recognition of the truth of a [proposition]—judgment;
- (3) the manifestation of this judgment—assertion.⁶

A proposition is the content of some sentence. The proposition itself is not the declarative sentence or anything else that is discursively written or uttered. Rather, it is what is conveyed by the sentence. The actual assertion is not to be confused with the proposition. A judgment, for Frege, is the determination of the semantic content of the proposition, that is, whether it is true or false. Thus, the judgment differs from the proposition in so far as the former is the apprehension of what the latter inherently contains, namely, a truth value. The assertion is the declarative sentence that is spoken or written. It is the discursive statement.

The first sentence of the previously quoted paragraph illustrates that propositions are simply granted that they have a definite truth value. Propositions, under this account, are taken to have an inherent truth value. However, Frege writes that a proposition is either true or false. Consequently, he is endorsing a particular view of propositions, namely, defining them to have a particular truth value. Thus, someone else, such as Dewey, could define a proposition in a different way. The fact that it is a definition could substantiate an argument that propositions do not have an inherent truth value. Intertwined within Dewey's notion of a proposition is a judgment. A judgment is the

⁶ Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," *Mind* 65 (July 1956): 289-311.

recognition of the truth value of a proposition. Judgments, then, have the notion of truth values intricately interwoven within their definition.

Now, I will show the influence of Frege on Russell. Propositions, under Russell's account, have a fixed antecedent logical reality. Truth values are fixed throughout time; there is an "absolute" truth or falsity to propositions. This is clearly stated throughout Russell's writings. Consider the following passage by Russell:

When, in the preceding chapter, we were discussing propositions, we did not attempt to give a definition of the word "proposition." But although the word cannot be formally defined, it is necessary to say something as to its meaning, in order to avoid the very common confusion with "propositional functions," which are to be the topic of the present chapter.

We mean by a "proposition" primarily a form of words which expresses what is either true or false. I say "primarily," because I do not wish to exclude other than verbal symbols, or even mere thoughts if they have a symbolic character. But I think the word "proposition" should be limited to what may, in some sense, be called "symbols," and further to such symbols as give expression of truth and falsehood. Thus "two and two are four" and "two and two are five" will be propositions, and so will "Socrates is a man" and "Socrates is not a man."⁷

Russell begins this passage by stating that he wants to arrive at a definition of what propositions are. He takes propositions as inherently having some particular truth value. Rather than wishing to define propositions as how he understands them, Russell argues that propositions have a certain "meaning," which he identifies with, under his account, the truth or falsity of propositions.

As the previous discussions indicate, Russell's analysis of propositions and Dewey's analysis differ. Whereas Dewey emphasizes warranted assertibility in relation to propositions, Russell does not. Furthermore, while Russell emphasizes his view that propositions have semantic properties, Dewey presents an alternative perspective. While

⁷ Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1993), 155.

Dewey does say that warranted assertibility is the outcome of a successful inquiry, this is not intended to portray warranted assertibility as a substitution for truth. In other words, Dewey does not introduce this notion in order to present it in contrast with or as an opposition to Russell's account of propositions.

Russell makes the error of assuming that warranted assertibility is intended to be Dewey's substitution for truth, as in this passage by Russell: "Dr. Dewey holds that it has 'warranted assertibility'—which he substitutes for 'truth'—if it has certain kinds of effects."⁸ In fact, Dewey does not endorse this view, and Russell seems to overlook this.

Consider the following passage by Dewey:

Mr. Russell refers to my theory as one which "substitutes 'warranted assertibility' for truth." Under certain conditions, I should have no cause to object to this reference. But the conditions are absent; and it is possible that this view of "substitution" as distinct from and even opposed to *definition*, plays an important role in generating what I take to be misconceptions of my theory in some important specific matters. Hence, I begin by saying that my analysis of "warranted assertibility" is offered as a *definition* of the nature of knowledge in the honorific sense according to which only *true* beliefs are knowledge.⁹

Here, Dewey argues against the view that warranted assertibility can be substituted for truth. In fact, this has become a misconception of his theory. Warranted assertibility is rather how Dewey defines knowledge: only true beliefs, meaning those that are justified judgments, are to count as knowledge. Observing that Dewey's and Russell's logics are different in fundamental respects, and are not replacements of one another, is the key to understanding some of the criticisms that Russell raised against Dewey's logical theory.

⁸ Bertrand Russell, "John Dewey" in *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 826.

⁹ John Dewey, "Propositions, Warranted Assertibility, and Truth," *The Journal of Philosophy* 38 (March 1941): 265.

2.2 Dewey's Taxonomy of Propositions

The word *proposition*, for Dewey, has a different meaning than the traditional account. Most of the theories preceding Dewey's are concerned with the formal truth or falsity of a given proposition. Propositions in Dewey's view are something put forth to be considered; they are put forth as means for bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment. As such, they serve an intermediate role in the process of inquiry. Dewey was concerned with three sorts of attributions of things: qualities, kinds, and modes-of-being. These three sorts of attributions can only be understood within some particular context, in particular, the inquiry that is taking place. Propositions and logical forms only make sense within the context of some particular subject-matter. In this section, I will discuss Dewey's views on the nature and function of his different types of propositions.

Particular propositions are the most basic forms of propositions. They qualify a statement that refers to an individual, *this*, by attributing a sensory *quality* to it as a predicate. An example that Dewey gives of this is, "This is sour." In this example, a sensory quality (sour) is being attributed as a predicate to a particular individual, *this*. By a statement such as, "This is sour," it formulates two possible scenarios. First, some object that has been tasted has the property of being sour. Second, if certain circumstances take place, it is predicated that it will have the property of sourness.

Singular propositions determine something to be of a particular *kind*. Consider the sentence, "This is sweet." There are two possible interpretations of the sentence. A particular proposition would interpret the sentence such that a quality (sweetness) is

being attributed to something in particular. If it is interpreted as a singular proposition, then it is classifying it as being in a certain category, namely, of being sweet. Thus, the distinction between a particular proposition and singular is that the former attributes a quality (that is, for instance, is sweet, sour, or red) to some individual object, whereas the latter classifies it as falling within a category (that is, for instance, the category of oranges, buses, or books).

Contingent-conditional propositions are hypothetical propositions that refer to singulars. An example that Dewey gives of this is, “If this drought continues the harvest will be very poor.” This conditional statement expresses an existential relationship between the antecedent and the consequent. In other words, the antecedent and consequent have real-life meaning. What makes these types of propositions unique is that they contain singular propositions as their antecedent and consequent.¹⁰ These propositions are always marked by an “If-then” relationship.

Contingent-disjunctive propositions exclusively differentiate different kinds. Consider, for example, the statement, “Metals are either copper, or tin, or lead...” These propositions exhaust a wide range of possibilities, allowing one to narrow down facts. The purpose these conditionals serve is when, for example, someone has what they think is metal and is trying to determine whether it in fact is, contingent-disjunctive propositions allow the person to test it against the different types of metals that fall within the disjunction of subkinds.

¹⁰ As I understand this, the singular proposition in the antecedent is ‘drought’, since it is a kind of rainfall, that is, a period which has no rainfall. The singular proposition in the consequent is ‘harvest’ because it is a kind of season, one when crops ripen.

Universal propositions involve modes of action. They formulate constraints among the different types of things that belong to kinds of things. In other words, they delineate the characteristics that hold for kinds. Universal propositions formulate constraints that serve to differentiate certain kinds from other kinds. For example, a universal proposition would serve to formulate constraints that would differentiate the kind metal from another kind, such as a harvest. They set characteristics in place that define (or limit) a given kind of thing. Universal propositions differ from singular propositions insofar as the latter state that some particular object is a given kind, whereas the former state the characteristics that belong to the latter. They specify characteristics independently of any particular situation. These propositions are presumed to remain universal across all situations.

Universal disjunctive propositions serve to narrow down a wide range of possible alternatives. The purpose of them is to rule out a wide range of alternatives by categorizing things of certain kinds as having disjunctions of subcategories. The kind of agent “souring agent” can be categorized as including “lemons, or tomatoes, or vinegar,” its disjunction of subcategories.

2.3 The Role of the Context and Situation in Dewey’s Logical Theory

The previous presentation of Dewey’s taxonomy of propositions serves to illustrate the importance of the context and situation in Dewey’s work. All of the propositions presented rely upon some particular subject-matter for their existence. For Dewey, propositions arise within some particular subject-matter and play an instrumental role

(they are “tools”) for arriving at a warrantably assertible judgment. Propositions can only be understood within their context in inquiry.

Some commentators on Dewey have written about this topic, for example, Tom Burke in his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*. In addition to his book publication, he has published many articles and has delivered many presentations on Dewey's theory of inquiry. Burke discusses propositions and inquiry in the aforementioned book in a way which provides support to my discussion. Consider what Burke writes in Chapter VII, “Propositions and Judgments,” of his *Dewey's New Logic*: “These three sorts of attribution, not to mention the taxonomy of propositions Dewey presents on the basis of this three-way distinction, make sense only in the context of their function in inquiry.”¹¹ As Burke writes, the three attributions presented above and Dewey's taxonomy of propositions only make sense within some particular inquiry.

Another commentator on Dewey's theory of inquiry is Douglas Browning of the University of Texas, Austin. He has published articles on and delivered presentations in this field. Douglas Browning has provided a presentation, “Some Remarks on Burke's *Dewey's New Logic*,” in which he discusses the role of situations and inquiry in Dewey's account of logic, in addition to assessing Burke's interpretation of Dewey. Douglas Browning discusses inquiry as follows in the aforementioned presentation: “Here it is important to observe that every inquiry, including inquiry into inquiry, is initiated by and within a specific problematic situation with a unique and pervasive quality of

¹¹ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 177.

indetermination.”¹² Browning illustrates by this passage that inquiry occurs only when a problematic situation is taking place. Since propositions take place within the context of inquiry, propositions can only be understood within a particular situation.

Further support for this claim can be evidenced by an analysis of the above propositional types. All of the propositional types delineated involve at least one of the three attributions of things discussed: *qualities* of things, *kinds* of things, and modes-of-being. Qualities of things involve the particular attributes that belong to something, such as a particular color. Dividing objects into particular categories delineates *kinds* of things. Thus, the “red-ness” of a specific bicycle is concerned with its quality, being the color red. The categorization of what we call ‘bicycles’ as “bicycles” involves the attribution of *kinds*. Consequently, it would be odd to try to imagine these two kinds of attributions, *qualities* and *kinds*, outside of some particular context. For instance, to attempt to imagine something having a quality outside of the context of such things as colors, for example, to instantiate them. The same thing applies to modes-of-being. These can only be understood as relations between different kinds of things. Since they involve relations, there must be some context in which they occur in order to be captured. It doesn’t seem plausible to say that relations between things take place when they do not occur within any subject-matter (there would be nothing for there to be relations between).

Having discussed the importance of propositions in relation to the establishment of a warrantably assertible judgment, I will now turn to a discussion of the role that

¹² Douglas Browning, “Some Remarks on Burke’s *Dewey’s New Logic*,” (invited paper), American Philosophical Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 24, 1997.

context plays in relation to judgments. Considering that the context plays such an important role for Dewey's analysis of propositions, it would only seem to follow that context would play an important role for judgments, since propositions play a role in arriving at warrantably assertible judgments. In order to illustrate this, it is important to turn to Dewey's discussion of judgments.

Successful inquiries are directed towards establishing a warranted judgment, which means that they are aimed at arriving at a stable conclusion. A judgment for Dewey consists of establishing a determinate predicate to a subject. Thus, if we let '*s*' stand for some subject and '*p*' for some predicate, then a sentence '*s* is *p*' is said to be warrantably utterable.¹³ The judgment is actually asserted by acting in accordance with the predicate *p* in some particular situation. Dewey's stance here is very action-oriented, meaning that there is a direct correlation between an inquirer acting in accordance with some particular predicate in some situation. Subjects and predicates cannot be understood apart from some particular context that instantiates each of them. This is an attempt on Dewey's part to provide a naturalistic understanding of logic. Consider the following text by Dewey to illustrate this:

In the case of the meaning of words, ... happenings, like sounds, which originally were devoid of significance acquire meaning by use, and that this use always involves a *context*. With children just learning to understand and use speech, the context is largely that of objects and acts. A child associates *hat* with putting something on the head when he is going outdoors; *drawer* with pulling something out of a table, etc. Single words, because of the direct presence of a context of actions performed with objects, then have the force that complete sentences have to an older person. Gradually other words that originally gained meaning by use in a context of overt actions become capable of supplying the context, so that the mind can dispense with the context of things and deeds. Speaking in sentences marks obviously a *linguistic*

¹³ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 158-159.

gain. But the more important matter is that it shows a person has made a great *intellectual* advance. He can now think by putting together verbal signs of things that are not present to the senses and are not accompanied by any overt actions on his part.¹⁴

This passage has importance in relation to Dewey's logical theory insofar as predication is to be understood first in terms of overt action, and only later in relation to sentences. Words are first acquired by means of overt action in some particular context. After the context has occurred, words are formed in sentences and linguistic expressions apart from overt actions or contexts. In this sense, logic should be understood in relation to the natural environment, for it is within a particular context in the natural world that we begin to construct the rudimentary elements of our logical theories.

Furthermore, support that Dewey's stance on propositions that they are context-sensitive is revealed by Burke's discussion of the different perspectives that knowledge of things can take.¹⁵ The facts of any given situation are contingent upon the perspective from which one is viewing the situation. Burke provides the following example to illustrate this. When sitting at one end of the table, the salt is to the left of the pepper, while sitting at the opposite side of the table, the salt is to the right.¹⁶ Dewey's logical theory can accommodate the puzzle that arises from knowledge of basic propositions changing from perspective to perspective. Burke argues for this position for the following reason, namely, that their accounts of propositions are intricately interconnected to their theories of knowledge.

¹⁴ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 159. Burke cites this passage from Dewey to discuss Dewey's commitment to a naturalistic account of logic. I cite Dewey's passage from Burke only because Burke proceeds to discuss Dewey's account of logic as being naturalistic. Also, see the original text, John Dewey. *How We Think* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1933), 144-145.

¹⁵ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 224.

¹⁶ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 224.

Burke presents Russell's theory of knowledge as Russell accepting atomic facts.¹⁷ Atomic facts are known when there is the apprehension of a fact or state of affairs of the actual world.¹⁸ Thus, the knowledge of the world that we acquire for Russell is unchanging knowledge, as facts and states of affairs of the world remain the same throughout time when and after they have taken place. Thus, Burke's point about Russell's theory of knowledge is that, in relation to the salt shaker and pepper shaker example, when viewing them both from one side of the table the salt is to the left of the pepper, and this remains the same. There is an objective fact about the matter that the salt is to the left of the pepper and it remains this way, as the structure of the situation (the order of the salt and pepper) corresponds to an objective state of affairs of the world.

Consequently, when moving to the other side of the table, the salt will be to the right of the pepper and the pepper to the left of the salt. Thus, the fact about the location of the salt and pepper will have changed relative to the original perspective where it was being viewed. Since the state of affairs of the world (the location of the salt and pepper relative to one another) will have changed, then it will raise the puzzle about what the objective state of affairs of the world is, since the state of affairs of the world will present two accounts of the location of the objects.

¹⁷ In Chapter V of his book, Burke maintains that perhaps Russell did not formulate a solidified theory of knowledge. Even though I discuss Russell's position as a theory of knowledge, I am not maintaining any solid stance on whether or not Russell in fact has a theory of knowledge. Rather, I present it as a theory of knowledge just to illustrate that Russell's and Dewey's responses to the puzzle that arises when a proposition is viewed under a different context are contingent upon what they accept as constituting knowledge. Thus, I refer to Russell's position on knowledge as a theory of knowledge, even though the plausibility of whether Russell has a theory of knowledge may be under consideration.

¹⁸ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 222.

As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, Dewey, on the other hand, views propositions as instrumental tools in the process of inquiry. Furthermore, there is always a unique context to every inquiry that takes place. That is to say, every inquiry undergone is pervaded with unique contextual factors that make the particular inquiry unlike any other. Since propositions take place within the process of inquiry and inquiry always occurs within a context, propositions, too, take place within a context. Furthermore, according to Dewey's theory of knowledge, all knowledge is subject to revision. He does not endorse an account of knowledge that regards knowledge of something as static and fixed. Burke discusses this in Chapter V of his *Dewey's New Logic*:

But another way to see the point about the changeability of knowledge is that we can take different perspectives on things, in different situations, and "know" them in different ways. This is, for instance, at the root of Dewey's manner of reconciling commonsense knowledge with scientific knowledge (of the very same things)—namely, neither is more or less right than the other, but either is more or less appropriate to the perspective it assumes. We "revise" knowledge in this sense by changing our perspective, not necessarily by falsifying previous beliefs. This applies to what are taken to be "the facts" as much as to any respective hypothetical apparatus involved. The facts in the one case are simply not facts in the other (which is not to say they are now false but simply that they are no longer part of the situation).¹⁹

The proposition 'the salt is to the left of the pepper' takes place, for Dewey, within the context of the inquiry taking place. Since Dewey endorses an account of propositions that regards them as contextually-sensitive, when examining the salt and pepper at the opposite side of the table, he can accommodate the change in perspective of the proposition (i.e., the salt is now to the right of the pepper). As a result of not endorsing a theory of knowledge that regards propositions about the world as

¹⁹ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 224.

corresponding to objective states of the world, Dewey can accommodate the puzzle that arises from the shift in perspective when the salt and pepper are viewed from the opposite side of the table.

2.4 Russell's Criticisms of Dewey's Logic

In Chapter V of his book *Dewey's New Logic*, Tom Burke examines some of the arguments that Russell directed against Dewey's theory of logic. Some of the main criticisms that Russell directed against this area, Burke argues, stemmed from a misunderstanding of Dewey's views. In Chapter V, Burke diagnoses Russell's criticisms as not having understood Dewey's distinction between propositions and judgments. In this section, I will discuss two of the criticisms brought forth by Burke against Russell's writings on Dewey's theory of inquiry.

The first criticism Burke raises against Russell is that he misunderstands Dewey's distinction between propositions and judgments. He does not understand what role propositions serve in the process of inquiry. The following text by Russell indicates this:

Beliefs, we are now supposing, may be tested by their consequences, and may be considered to possess "warranted assertibility" when their consequences are of certain kinds. The consequences to be considered relevant may be logical consequences only, or may be widened to embrace all kinds of effects; and between these two extremes any number of intermediate positions are possible. In the case of the car that won't go, you think it may be this, or it may be that, or it may be the other; if it is *this* and I do so-and-so and the car does not go; therefore it was not *this*. But when I apply the same experimental procedure to the hypothesis that it was *that*, the car does go; therefore the belief that it was *that* has "warranted assertibility." So far, we have only the ordinary procedure of induction: "If *p*, then *q*; now *q* is true; therefore *p* is true." E.g., "If pigs have wings, then some winged animals are good to eat; therefore pigs have wings." This form of inference is called "scientific method."²⁰

²⁰ Russell, "Dewey's New Logic," 149.

Burke quotes this passage to show that Russell misinterprets Dewey's views of inquiry in numerous places. Russell attributes beliefs to the concept of warranted assertibility, which are not said to be judgments in Dewey's view. Judgments are said to be warrantably assertible or not, not beliefs. Russell fails to recognize this distinction. Support for Burke's view is evidenced by Dewey's discussion of the ambiguity of the word 'belief' in Chapter 1 of his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Here, Dewey discusses exactly why belief cannot be designated the objective outcome of inquiry. In other words, he discusses the reason that it cannot be identified with warranted assertibility.

Belief can be understood to be the settled outcome of inquiry. It is the objective subject-matter that results from the process of inquiry. However, in popular usage, belief can be understood as something that a person entertains or holds. Because of the ambiguity that pervades this word, Dewey writes that it is not a suitable word to designate or to be substituted for warranted assertibility. Dewey writes: "The ambiguity of the word thus renders its use inadvisable for the purpose in hand."²¹

As noted earlier, Burke raises a second criticism against Russell concerning Dewey's distinction between propositions and judgments. The first point that Burke considers is that Dewey draws a distinction between the validity and invalidity of propositions in inquiry and the truth or falsity of propositions.²² Burke's contention is supported by Dewey's texts:

The view most current at the present time is probably that which regards propositions as the unitary material of logical theory. Propositions upon this view

²¹ Dewey, *Logic*, 7.

²² Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 203.

have their defining property in the property of formal truth-falsity. According to the position here taken, propositions are to be differentiated and identified on the ground of the function of their contents as *means*, procedural and material, further distinctions of forms of propositions being instituted on the ground of the special ways in which their respective characteristic subject-matters function as means.... [A]t this point it is pertinent to note that, since means as such are neither true nor false, truth-falsity is *not* a property of propositions. Means are either effective or ineffective; pertinent or relevant; wasteful or economical, the criterion for the difference being found in the consequences with which they are connected as means. On this basis, special propositions are *valid* (strong, effective) or *invalid* (weak, inadequate); loose or rigorous, etc.

Validity-invalidity is thus to be distinguished not only from truth-falsity but from formal correctness. Any given proposition is such that it promotes or retards the institution of final resolution. It cannot be logically adjudged, therefore, *merely* on the basis of its formal relations to other propositions. The syllogism “All satellites are made of green cheese; the moon is a satellite; therefore, it is made of green cheese” is formally correct. The propositions involved are, however, *invalid*, not just because they are “materially false,” but because instead of promoting inquiry they would, if taken and used, retard and mislead it.²³

Propositions, under Dewey’s account, are evaluated in terms of their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, based upon whether or not they contribute as means. Dewey conceived of validity in terms of the strength of propositions. Invalidity deals with the weakness or ineffectiveness of propositions. The strength or weakness of propositions (validity or invalidity) is important insofar as they would assist in inquiry rather than deter it.

Dewey’s concern is that Russell overlooks this aspect of his account of propositions. Russell assumes the Fregean view of propositions and reads this account into his interpretation of Dewey. Consider the following passage by Dewey in support of his concern about Russell:

The exclusive devotion of Mr. Russell to discourse is manifested in his assumption that *propositions* are the subject-matter of inquiry, a view assumed so unconsciously that it is taken for granted that Peirce and I likewise assume it. But according to our view—and according to that of any thoroughgoing empiricist—*things and events* are the

²³ Dewey, *Logic*, 287-288.

material and objects of inquiry, and propositions are *means* in inquiry, so that as conclusions of a given inquiry they become means of carrying on further inquiries. Like other means they are modified and improved in the course of use. Given the beliefs (i) that propositions are from the start the objects of inquiry and (ii) that all propositions have either truth or falsity as their inherent property, and (iii) then read these two assumptions into theories—like Peirce’s and mine—which deny both of them, and the product is just the doctrinal confusion that Russell finds in what we have said.²⁴

For Dewey, objects and events are the concern of propositions, not the truth or falsity.

Objects and events serve a role insofar as they carry on inquiry. Given Russell’s conception of propositions, Dewey argues that it is clear that Russell misinterprets him. Russell assumes that propositions, for Dewey, are the starting points of inquiry and have a particular truth value.

The place where Russell went wrong in interpreting Dewey in this passage is that he failed to realize that propositions serve an instrumental function in terms of bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment. Finally, the above quoted text, as Dewey argues, reveals that Russell assumes that the conception that he has of propositions applies to Dewey’s conception of propositions in his theory of inquiry (the mistake of inserting his own theory into Dewey’s).

2.5 Russell’s Neglect of Context in Dewey’s Logic: A Criticism Against Russell

While Burke provides an account of the context-sensitiveness of propositions, his discussion does not address every issue at stake. Burke, accurately, argues that propositions for Dewey are context-sensitive, but he fails to continue this discussion as it relates to Russell’s interpretation of Dewey. In this section, I will show that one of

²⁴ John Dewey, “Experience, Knowledge and Value,” chap in *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1939), vol. 1, *The Library of Living Philosophers*, ed., Paul Arthur Schlipp, 573.

Russell's primary misunderstandings of Dewey's logic concerns the fact that Russell did not understand that propositions can change from context to context, meaning that truth values do not have a definite "truth or falsity" under many instances. Russell neglected this aspect of Dewey's thought, and as a consequence failed to come to an accurate presentation of Dewey's logical theory.

Russell's misinterpretation of Dewey's account of propositions occurs in more than one place. However, in one particular passage, the evidence is clear that he not only misunderstands Dewey's account of inquiry but is criticizing Dewey for the role that propositions play in his account. Russell presumes that propositions entail a definite truth value, so he fails to observe that they are context-sensitive and do not have a definite truth value. Russell provides the following metaphor to attempt to capture Dewey's account of inquiry:

The position *seems* to be that there is a certain activity called "inquiry," as recognizable as the activities of eating or drinking; like all activity, it is stimulated by discomfort, and the particular discomfort concerned is called "doubt," just as hunger is the discomfort that stimulates eating, and thirst is the discomfort that stimulates drinking. And as hunger may lead you to kill an animal, skin it, cook it, so that though you have been concerned with the same animal throughout, it is very different when it becomes food from what it was to begin with, so inquiry manipulates and alters its subject-matter until it becomes logically assimilable and intellectually appetizing. Then doubt is allayed, at least for a time. But the subject-matter of inquiry, like the wild boar of Valhalla, is perpetually reborn, and the operation of logical cooking has to be more delicately performed as the intellectual palate grows more refined. There is therefore no end to the process of inquiry, and no dish that can be called "absolute truth."²⁵

Russell appears to hold a preconceived notion of propositions throughout this passage, in which he appears to be criticizing Dewey's account of inquiry at the end when he states,

²⁵ Russell, "Dewey's New *Logic*," 147.

“and no dish that can be called ‘absolute truth’.” Russell’s mistake at this point is assuming that his views of propositions must also apply to Dewey’s account.

The following passage is another instance in which Russell seems to presuppose that Dewey has a similar theory of logic as his own:

Inquiry uses “assertions” as its tools, and assertions are “warranted” in so far as they produce the desired results. But in inquiry, as in any other practical operation, better tools may, from time to time, be invented, and the old ones are then discarded. Indeed, just as machines can enable us to make better machines, so the temporary results of an inquiry may be the very means which lead to better results. In this process there is no finality, and therefore no assertion is warranted for all time, but only at a given stage of inquiry. “Truth” as a static concept is therefore to be discarded.²⁶

This passage reveals the extent to which Russell presupposes that Dewey must accept a similar view of logic as his own. In particular, his final statement illustrates this clearly: “‘Truth’ as a static concept is therefore to be discarded.” Russell presupposes that his account of propositions (they are true or false) should be incorporated into other views on logic, as he notes that it is not incorporated into Dewey’s account.

Dewey regards propositions, as I’ve shown, as concerned with context-sensitivity. Russell continuously presupposes that other logicians should develop logics that are similar in content to his. However, for Dewey, propositions depend upon the context in which they occur, and do not assume a fixed truth value across time. As a result of his many divergences from Dewey, Russell’s criticisms against Dewey do not fully capture the points that Dewey was trying to make

²⁶ Bertrand Russell, “Warranted Assertibility,” in *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), 401.

CHAPTER III

BURKE ON DEWEY ON EVOLUTION

In his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*, Tom Burke discusses Dewey's logical theory from the standpoint of the debate that took place between Russell and Dewey. Burke provides an insightful and informative picture of the world of Dewey's logical writings, as well as in-depth. While his book is of first-rate quality, there are a few aspects that are in need of critical examination.

Burke discusses Dewey's account of situations from an evolutionary perspective. Even though Dewey thought evolution would have a major impact on future sciences and philosophies of nature, he did not, however, reserve a place for evolution in his logical theory. Dewey argues that the biological has an important function in the foundations for his theory of inquiry. However, it would have been more appropriate for Dewey to use the term 'physiological' based on the ideas he is conveying.

The distinction between physiology and biology resides in the nature of what they study. Human physiology studies the functions of the human body. The human body is composed of organs and the composition of different organs comprise different systems of the body (for instance, the skeletal system and the muscular system).¹ Biology, however, is concerned with studying the nature of life in all its different manifestations. The study of biology takes evolution as the starting principle for explaining the nature of human life, for consider this passage from a biology textbook:

¹ Ruth L. Memmler. *The Structure & Function of the Human Body*, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2000), 3.

“To understand life one must understand and appreciate how evolution takes place.”²

Whereas biology takes evolution as an underlying principle of its study of different life forms, physiology does not assume any theory about the origins of life to describe the organs or systems that it is exploring.

In this chapter, I will begin with an examination of Dewey’s evolutionary views. Following this, I will turn to an examination of Chapter II of his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* to reveal what role the biological, or what I interpret to be the physiological, serves in his account of logic. Afterwards, I will discuss Burke’s emphasis on the role of evolution in relation to Dewey’s discussion of situations. Then, I will argue against this interpretation. I will claim that Burke inserts an evolutionary theory into his reading of Dewey’s account of situations. Instead of being concerned with evolution, I will argue that Dewey is more concerned with describing the experiential and social aspects of inquiry. Dewey accomplishes this in two ways, including: (i) his emphasis on the postulate of immediate empiricism, and (ii) the role that social interactions play in his theory of inquiry.

Burke’s evolutionary interpretation is certainly insightful and informative. However, his interpretation is not in accordance with Dewey’s postulate of immediate empiricism, according to which we are to take our experience as our starting point for inquiry, and his emphasis on the social foundations of inquiry, according to which humans’ cultures exert a great amount of control over our backgrounds and development.

² Timothy H. Goldsmith and William F. Zimmerman. *Biology, Evolution, and Human Nature* (Danvers: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001), 19.

3.1 Dewey's Discussion of Evolution

In his *The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy*, Dewey discusses the importance of Charles Darwin's publication of the "Origin of Species" on the natural sciences. Dewey begins by noting that prior to Darwin's publication, nature was regarded as fixed and final; it was concerned with permanency. Change and origin were treated as signs of defects. Darwin's publication, Dewey argues, would alter the conceptions of nature and morals that previously reigned.

The usage of the word 'species', Dewey notes, goes back to the time of the scholastics. Extremely impressed by the characteristic traits of the life of the plants and animals during their time, the ancient Greeks made these traits the way of defining nature and explaining society.³ The Greeks thought that an understanding of the mystery of life might lead them to believe that the key to the nature of the universe (including the heaven and earth) was within their reach.⁴ Their approach to understanding the mystery of life lay primarily in their understanding of the word species.

Dewey presents a historical discussion of the conception of nature that dominated prior to Darwin's publication in order to reveal the meaning behind the title "The Origin of Species." Dewey tells a story of how the ancient Greeks arrived at their conception of nature, and how this led to their definition of the word 'species'. The story will be told from Dewey's standpoint.

The ancient Greeks were impressed with and persistent upon understanding the nature of life. They observed that seeds and eggs were passive and inactive. Through

³ *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed., John J. McDermott, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 33.

⁴ Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 33.

time, however, these seeds and eggs underwent rapid and drastic changes in size, shape, and qualities. These perceived changes were orderly; they were working towards fulfilling a purpose. Non-living things (such as burning wood) were not directed towards some final goal; they were not in a state of realization or fulfillment of purpose.

The changes taking place in living things were fixed and orderly. Changes that occurred in living organisms preserved the net effects of previous changes and prepared for future activities.⁵ These changes did not cease until there was a completed end. The principle that functioned through changes and held things to a fixed course was referred to as *species*.⁶ The depth of the term was increased in its application to everything that observed order amidst the state of flux. Realization of purpose in nature is comparable to the realization of purpose in living organisms, such as plants and animals. In other words, like plants and animals, nature strives towards the fulfillment of an end.

The conception of species that dominated the Greek era was exhibited in their understanding of not only nature but also knowledge.⁷ The ancient Greeks regarded change alone without knowledge as flux, and for the ancient Greeks this “insulted intelligence.”⁸ Dewey expresses this position as follows: “The conception of *eidos*, species, a fixed form and final cause, was the central principle of knowledge as well as of nature. Upon it rested the logic of science. Change as change is mere flux and lapse;

⁵ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 33.

⁶ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 34.

⁷ Even though Dewey attributes this conception of species to the ancient Greeks, he does not, however, specify exactly which of the ancient Greek philosophers he is referring. I speculate, however, that some of these philosophers would include Parmenides and Plato.

⁸ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 34.

it insults intelligence.”⁹ Knowledge that is fully attained (is genuine, as Dewey phrases it) is cognized through changes, where changes are viewed as necessary elements for arriving at knowledge that is permanent. Dewey expresses this position in the following way: “Genuinely to know is to grasp a permanent end that realizes itself through changes, holding them thereby within the metes and bounds of fixed truth.”¹⁰

Attaining complete, unalterable knowledge consisted of relating everything to their end, which is “pure intelligence,” for Dewey writes: “Completely to know is to relate all special forms to their one single end and good: pure contemplative intelligence.”¹¹ Attaining knowledge consisted of grasping some fixed end, which was characterized as reaching unalterable truth. Since nature is in a constant state of flux, the conditions of attaining knowledge cannot be reached through understanding nature. Our experience of the world is mediated through our sensory and perceptual apparatuses, which are subject to change and flux. Thus, observation and experimentation are subject to fallibility.

There were others, Dewey notes, who questioned this conception of nature before Darwin entered the picture. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the physical sciences were going through a revolution. Galileo furthered this transition from interest in the permanent and unchanging to the conception that viewed nature as consisting of flux and indeterminacy. If it were not for certain important scientific figures, Darwin’s account of nature would never have been formulated. Among these scientists are Kepler, Galileo, and Copernicus. Dewey argues that the importance of Darwin on

⁹ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 34.

¹⁰ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 34.

¹¹ Dewey, “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy,” 34.

philosophy resides in breaking up the ancient Greek view and furthering the importance of the role of transition in accounting for natural phenomena.¹² Doing this opened the way for understanding morals and the nature of the mind in a new light.

As a side note, however, not all of the ancient Greeks endorsed the traditional view of nature. Heraclitus, for instance, rejected the thesis that the world was in a permanent state of Being, and accepted the world of Becoming, by which everything in the material world is in a constant state of flux and change.¹³ Reality does not possess any stable and unalterable characteristics. Consider Heraclitus' writings: "All things come into being through opposition, and all are in flux like a river."¹⁴

Heraclitus posited fire as the single principle from which everything in the universe originates (and is in perpetual change itself), for the following text is attributed to him: "All comes from fire and to fire it shall return."¹⁵ Thus, unlike other philosophers during his time, such as Parmenides, Heraclitus did not posit the existence of any world other than the constantly changing material world. As a result of this, Heraclitus would be an exception to the ancient Greek philosophers Dewey is describing.

Despite the fact that there were people questioning the philosophy that dated to the ancient Greeks, this philosophy still remained the primary one in Europe for over two thousand years.¹⁶ Dewey connects this philosophy to the argument from design.

¹² Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 35.

¹³ This is the traditional reading of Heraclitus' writings. I will not address any of the current debates taking place on whether or not Heraclitus actually endorsed a philosophy of nature that only reserved a place for regarding nature as concerned with change and rejected altogether the possibility of permanency with respect to nature.

¹⁴ Heraclitus Fr. 3 in Louis P. Pojman, ed., *Classics of Philosophy*, Vol. I: Ancient and Medieval (New York: Oxford, 1998), 12.

¹⁵ Heraclitus Fr. 7 in *ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶ Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 36.

The main strength of this argument was the detailed knowledge of plants and animals. Many factors during the day added to the progress of the sciences of zoology, botany, and embryology, including: the amazing ability that plants have to adapt to their environment, the ability that organs have to adapt to organisms, and complex parts of the organism to the organism as a whole.¹⁷ Taken collectively, these sciences added so substantially to the argument from design that by the eighteenth century this argument was the focal point for all theistic philosophy.

Darwin's philosophy, with the principle of natural selection, was a sharp opposition to the argument from design. If the world is as Darwin envisioned it, there is no causal preordained force to create nature and human life. According to the Darwinian picture, all organic adaptations are due to constant variation. Furthermore, any variations that are harmful in the struggle for existence are eliminated. Some people criticized this as downright materialism, and attributed Darwin's theories to making chance the cause of everything in the universe.¹⁸

Darwin's new outlook, Dewey argues, introduces responsibility into life. If the world is conceived of as fixed from the start and there is no place for chance to occur, then there is no responsibility placed upon each person for their actions. The philosophy of nature that preceded Darwin placed responsibility onto some transcendental force rather than the individual. Philosophy must, Dewey argues, produce a method for

¹⁷ Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 37.

¹⁸ Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 37.

locating and handling the conflicts that occur in everyday life for individuals, including moral and political life.

Finally, Dewey writes that old ideas give way slowly. These old ideas become habits and predispositions that form and ingrain our attitudes and beliefs. Old questions disappear and fade from existence. New questions corresponding to the new material which has replaced the old receive preference. By writing such phrases, Dewey is observing that the previous philosophies of nature (the ancient Greeks) are replaced once new philosophies of nature have been introduced (Darwin's, in this case). Dewey's belief in the future success of Darwin's evolutionary theory is expressed in the following text by Dewey: "Doubtless the greatest dissolvent in contemporary thought of old questions, the greatest precipitant of new methods, new intentions, new problems, is the one effected by the scientific revolution that found its climax in the 'Origin of Species'." ¹⁹

3.2 The Biological Foundations of Inquiry

The preceding discussion illustrates that Dewey recognizes evolution as a science that will have an impact on the development of future sciences and philosophies of nature. Having explored some of his writings on evolution, I will turn to his theory of inquiry to determine what role evolution has in this. In his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, Dewey expresses his view that logic is naturalistic. What does Dewey mean by the term 'naturalistic'? I will examine this question in this section. In addition, I will provide a

¹⁹ Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy," 41.

discussion of what role the physiological, or what Dewey terms the ‘biological’, plays in his logic.

In Chapter I, Dewey discusses the various meanings of the word ‘naturalistic’. According to the first sense, it means, on the one hand, there is no break in continuity between inquiry and biological and physical operations. That is, included in the foundations of inquiry are biological and physical operations. There is a close interconnection between the two. On the other hand, it means that inquiry (rational operations) is not identical with biological and physical operations. Inquiry grows out of organic activities, but is not identical with them. Another use of the word regards logic as naturalistic in the sense that it is concerned with the observable insofar as inquiry involves observation and resolution of problems in the natural environment.

In relation to his discussion of the different usages of ‘naturalistic’, Dewey writes that inquiry is not naturalistic in the sense that humans can be reduced to apes or amoebae. Dewey indicates one of the ambiguities surrounding the word ‘naturalistic’ in the following text: “One ambiguity attending the word ‘naturalistic’ is that it may be understood to involve reduction of human behavior to the behavior of apes, amoebae, or electrons or protons.”²⁰ By writing this statement, Dewey is expressing his view that human behavior cannot be understood within a framework that reduces human behavior to animals or physical particles. Human behavior cannot be understood from a reductionistic scientific perspective.

²⁰ Dewey, *Logic*, 26.

Rather, humans are social creatures, meaning they have languages, cultures, and live in communities. Dewey discusses humans and their relationship to their cultures as follows: “But man is *naturally* a being that lives in association with others in communities possessing language, and therefore enjoying a transmitted culture. Inquiry is a mode of activity that is socially conditioned and has cultural consequences.”²¹ Humans, by their nature, have the need to socialize and form groups of communities. Thus, Dewey uses the word ‘naturalistic’ in multiple ways, none of which include explaining humans in a reductionistic physical language.

For Dewey, biological functions occupy a fundamental role in his theory of inquiry. He addresses this in Chapter II, “The Existential Matrix of Inquiry: Biological,” of his *Logic*: “This chapter and the following one are occupied with development of the statement that logic is naturalistic. The present chapter is concerned with the biological natural foundations of inquiry.”²² The biological organs that assist us in the process of inquiry, including eyes, nose, and ears, are necessary conditions for inquiry. Inquiry could not take place without biological functions and operations.

Since this is Dewey’s primary thesis in this chapter, it would have been more appropriate for Dewey to term it the ‘physiological foundations’ of inquiry. The term ‘biology’ carries the connotations of evolution, but Dewey does not discuss this in Chapter II of his book. From hereafter in this essay, I will use the biological terminology to refer to the biological foundations of inquiry, only because those are terms Dewey uses.

²¹ Dewey, *Logic*, 26-27.

²² Dewey, *Logic*, 30.

One of the primary postulates of a naturalistic theory of logic is continuity between the lower and higher activities. It precludes the possibility for there to be reduction of the higher to the lower. By continuity, Dewey is referring to something akin to the growth of an organism from seed to maturity.²³ According to Dewey, what is excluded from the postulate of continuity is the possibility of an outside force causing the changes that occur in some living organism. Dewey's theory requires that nothing can be introduced *ad hoc* to explain the cause of something. Anything that is explaining the cause of something must already have been proven to exist in nature before it can be introduced into any theory to explain something else. Dewey discusses this position in the following text:

What *is* excluded by the postulate of continuity is the appearance upon the scene of a totally new outside force as a cause of changes that occur. Perhaps from mutations that are due to some form of radio-activity a strikingly new form emerges. But radio-activity is not invented *ad hoc* and introduced from without in order to account for such transformation. It is first known to exist in nature, and then, if this particular theory of the origin of mutations is confirmed, is found actually to occur in biological phenomena and to be operative among them in observable and describable fashion.²⁴

Dewey relates the postulate of continuity to the discussion of logic by stating that we cannot evoke a new faculty like Reason or Intuition in order to account for logical subject-matter.²⁵ In other words, anything that is used to account for logical subject-matter must already have been observed to exist.

Following this discussion, Dewey discusses the relationship between the organism and its environment. The organism and environment are intimately interconnected. In other words, the organism does not live as an isolated entity detached

²³ Dewey, *Logic*, 30.

²⁴ Dewey, *Logic*, 31.

²⁵ Dewey, *Logic*, 31.

from its environment. Rather, the organism's survival is directly contingent upon its surroundings. The organism is directly integrated into its environment. Dewey discusses organisms and their relationship to their environment in the following passage:

Whatever else organic life is or is not, it is a process of activity that involves an environment. It is a transaction extending beyond the spatial limits of the organism. An organism does not live *in* an environment; it lives by means of an environment. Breathing, the ingestion of food, the ejection of waste products, are cases of *direct* integration; the circulation of the blood and the energizing of the nervous system are relatively *indirect*.²⁶

Each type of organism, according to Dewey, has its own type of environment that it depends upon. Fish require a different environment in order to survive than does a bird. The type of environment that the organism requires depends upon its physiological constitution.

An organism is the type that it is, Dewey argues, because of the environment that it inhabits. If it lived in a different environment, then it would be a different type of organism. Dewey expresses this thus:

It follows that with every differentiation of structure the environment expands. For a new organ provides a new way of interacting in which things in the world that were previously indifferent enter into life-functions. The environment of an animal that is locomotor differs from that of a sessile plant; that of a jelly fish differs from that of a trout, and the environment of any fish differs from that of a bird. So, to repeat what was just said, the difference is not just that a fish lives *in* the water and a bird *in* the air, but that the characteristic functions of these animals are what they are because of the special way in which water and air enter into their respective activities.²⁷

The relationship between the organism and its environment can be misunderstood by thinking that the organism and its environment are independent of one another, and that the interaction spoken of is something that is a third factor. Interaction

²⁶ Dewey, *Logic*, 32.

²⁷ Dewey, *Logic*, 32.

exists insofar as organisms and their environment are naturally connected and interrelated. There is no third factor that mediates their connection. There is a natural world that exists independently of the organism, but it becomes an environment, a natural world in which organic interactions take place, when life-forms enter and function in the environment. Living organisms bring the environment into existence by their presence. Dewey discusses organisms as follows:

Unfortunately, however, a special philosophical interpretation may be unconsciously read into the common sense distinction. It will then be supposed that organism and environment are “given” as independent things and interaction is a third independent thing which finally intervenes. In fact, the distinction is a practical and temporal one, arising out of the state of tension in which the organism at a given time, in a given phase of life-activity, is set over against the environment as it then and there exists. There is, of course, a natural world that exists independently of the organism, but this world is *environment* only as it enters directly and indirectly into life-functions. The organism is itself a part of the larger natural world and exists as organism only in active connections with its environment.²⁸

Given that there is an interconnected relationship between organisms and their environments, there is a need, then, for a balance to be maintained between them. There has to be a mechanism, Dewey argues, that can respond to the variations that occur in the organism and in its environment. The result of an organism continuously maintaining a balance with its environment is a stable integration that results between them. Inanimate things do not integrate themselves with their environments. They do not have to continuously retain a balance with their surroundings. Dewey provides the example of a hammer breaking a stone into bits. Both the hammer and the stones are inanimate, and lack any organic functions and structures. Consequently, there will not

²⁸ Dewey, *Logic*, 40.

be a need for them to maintain a balance with one another, since neither the hammer nor the stones have organic functions.

When disturbance does occur, there is need exhibited to resolve the conflict and restore equilibrium to the situation. The more structures there are, the harder it becomes to maintain a balanced environment. A more complex organism will experience greater disturbances and will exert more energy to restore a balance between itself and the environment. Recognizing the need for restoration, initiating the process, and resolving the situation into a balanced one constitute the process of inquiry for Dewey. Resolving the situation into a determinate one (that is, a balanced relationship between the organism and its environment) results in a state of fulfillment and satisfaction.²⁹

3.3 A Criticism of Burke's Account of Situations

In this section, I will turn to a reflection on Burke's discussion of Dewey's notion of a situation. It has become characteristic of many philosophers nowadays to insert their own theories into their readings of other people. Turning to Burke's account of situations to delineate it is important for examining the emphasis he places on the role of evolution in his writings. In what ensues, I will examine this emphasis as it occurs in his *Dewey's New Logic*.

In Chapter II of his book, Burke discusses his understanding of a situation for Dewey. Burke defines it in the following way: "Situations, occurring in the ongoing activities of some given organism/environment system, are instances or episodes (or 'fields') of disequilibrium, instability, imbalance, disintegration, disturbance,

²⁹ Dewey, *Logic*, 34.

dysfunction, breakdown, etc.”³⁰ For Burke, situations, then, occur when a dysfunction or breakdown in the environment takes place between the organism and its environment. However, in writing of situations in such a manner, Burke discusses these terms which he uses to describe situations as though Dewey is coming from an evolutionary perspective in his introduction of the terms ‘situations’, ‘organisms’, and ‘environment’.

Burke proceeds from discussing what he conceives situations to be for Dewey to discussing how the aforementioned terms can be applied to any organism and environment in evolutionary complexity. Thus, he intertwines evolution into Dewey’s presentation of situations. Consider the following passage by Burke in support of my contention:

These terms [the terms he uses to describe situations] should apply to a wide range of organism/environment systems at virtually any level of evolutionary complexity. Inquiry, in a common mentalistic sense of the term, should be viewed as an evolutionary variation on what originally appears as an innate impulse of organism/environment systems to transform situations so as to counteract such instabilities.³¹

Another place where Burke discusses situations in such a manner is when he discusses situations as “remaining on a relatively abstract level, though focusing initially on biological and ecological considerations.”³² In discussing how organisms have the need to transform a situation from an indeterminate to a determinate one, Burke argues that this process appears as an “evolutionary variation” on inquiry. This is an instance where Burke discusses inquiry in terms of evolutionary terminology.

³⁰ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 22.

³¹ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 22.

³² Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 26.

In Chapter II of his *Logic*, Dewey discusses the extent to which biology, or what I have called physiology, plays a role in his theory of inquiry. To reiterate, biology is important in his theory of inquiry insofar as biological operations are necessary conditions for the process of inquiry. However, Dewey never discusses evolution in relation to this theory. Dewey simply expresses his view that in order for inquiry to occur, an organism must have the appropriate organs in order for observation and operation on the environment to take place. The terminology ‘organisms’ and ‘environments’ are words that are used to describe the notions he is trying to convey. Why does Burke assume that Dewey, in using the words ‘organism’ and ‘environment’, is presupposing the truth of some evolutionary theory or outlook?

Despite Dewey’s emphasis in his “The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy” that evolution may have an impact on future sciences, he never explicitly accepts this scientific theory. Furthermore, he never discusses evolution in relation to his account of situations. In discussing situations, his intention is to describe experience as it is had. Dewey is committed to the postulate of immediate empiricism, and he is using the terminology of ‘organisms’ and ‘environments’ as an alternative to the subject-object dualism picture of experience. It is a way to use terms that emphasize that experience is a transaction, and not a passive subject but an engaged organism. A major way in which organisms are engaged are through social foundations.

3.4 The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism and the Social Foundations of Inquiry

In this section, I will discuss two aspects of Dewey’s philosophy: (i) his postulate of immediate empiricism and (ii) his view that inquiry is social in nature. This

interpretation is intended as an alternative to Burke's evolutionary account. I will begin by showing how Dewey is committed to the postulate of immediate empiricism.

Afterwards, I will emphasize that not only is inquiry concerned with biology but also has social foundations. In other words, organisms have languages, cultures, and shared communities.

In an article entitled "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," Dewey writes that the topic of the article is *immediate empiricism*. According to immediate empiricism, we should begin with how we experience objects and events as a way of describing the world. Rather than abstracting oneself from one's present context, one should take as their starting-point their experiences. Dewey provides the example of a horse to illustrate this. If a horse is to be described, then whoever it is who wants it to be described, whether it is the statesman, horse-dealer, or family man, will describe the horse as they experience the horse. If their accounts differ in fundamental respects, then there is no reason to assume that one account is more real and the other more "phenomenal."

Each account that is provided of the horse will illustrate what the horse is experienced as for the statesman, or horse-dealer, or family man. In other words, the accounts of how each person experiences the horse are equally as real. Every account provides an equally real and determinate experience. Dewey discusses determinate experiences as follows: "In each case, the nub of the question is, *what sort of experience* is meant or indicated: a concrete and determinate experience, varying, when it varies, in specific real elements, and agreeing, when it agrees, in specific real elements, so that we

have a contrast, not between *a* Reality, and various approximations to, or phenomenal representations of Reality, but between different reals of experience.”³³

According to the postulate of immediate empiricism, knowledge of Reality cannot be attained by an all-competent all-knower. Knowledge is only one type of experience, and the postulate of immediate empiricism reveals the experiences associated with knowing. An erroneous assumption, from the immediatist’s standpoint, is to assume that things are what they are known as from the standpoint of someone with knowledge. Making this assumption leaves out of account how the knowledge standpoint is experienced.

To illustrate this, Dewey provides an example of a noise heard fluttering someone. From an empirical standpoint, the noise *is* fearsome. The actual noise *really* does startle the person. It is not an illusion. The noise is experienced as fearsome. However, when the noise is experienced as an object of knowledge, then it is no longer fearsome. When the tapping noise is realized to be a window shade tapping against the window, the frightful experience no longer takes place. The prior fearsome experience is now experienced as an object of knowledge, that is, as a non-fearsome window shade tapping against the window. The only that thing has changed, Dewey writes, is the experience. The truth of the matter has not changed. Dewey says the immediatist must ask how the frightful noise is experienced. Is it experienced as I-know-I-am-frightened, or I-am-frightened? According to Dewey, it must be expressed as the former phrase.

³³ John Dewey, “The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods* 2 (July 1905): 394.

Dewey summarizes his position in this essay by stating that the postulate of immediate empiricism is a particular method for doing philosophical analysis. The method is to take experience as the starting-point for doing philosophy. In order to find out what any philosophical term means (for example, substance, justice, genus, self), examining how it is experienced *as* is the method to apply.

Discussing the postulate of immediate empiricism is intended to illustrate the importance that Dewey places on our experience as a starting-point. Under this account, the physical language that is used to describe evolution cannot describe the way that something is experienced. A person's experience of something, such as a glass of cold water on a hot day, cannot be captured in physical language. For Dewey, it is something that must be experienced. Thus, for Dewey, there is more to life and inquiry than biological and physical language.

Humans' experiences contain an aspect that can only be captured from a first-person experiential standpoint, not from a detached, scientific outlook. The standpoint that evolution presupposes is that of a detached observer, examining organisms from a distance. A standpoint such as this cannot coalesce with Dewey's postulate of immediate empiricism, which he describes as a method of philosophical analysis that begins with our experience of the world.

While Dewey does acknowledge that inquiry is biological in nature, Dewey also holds that human beings are social creatures. In other words, the environment in which human beings live is not entirely physical. The environment is also cultural. When an indeterminate situation arises, biological as well as cultural factors work to resolve the

situation into a determinate one. Thus, for Dewey, biology and culture play important roles in the process of inquiry. Consider how Dewey discusses culture in the following text:

The environment in which human beings live, act and inquire, is not simply physical. It is cultural as well. Problems which induce inquiry grow out of the relations of fellow beings to one another, and the organs for dealing with these relations are not only the eye and ear, but the meanings which have developed in the course of living, together with the ways of forming and transmitting culture with all its constituents of tools, arts, institutions, traditions and customary beliefs.³⁴

Typical behaviors of human beings are cultural in nature. Human beings listen to music, dance, cook food, and sit around the fire and talk. These behaviors are cultural and social in nature, and, Dewey argues, cultural activities are more common than ones that are physical reactions to physical affairs, such as jumping at a sudden noise.³⁵ Furthermore, our reactions to the physical environment are seriously influenced and affected by our cultural environment. The physical environment is understood by means of our cultural orientations. In the following passage, Dewey discusses the relationship between the physical and the cultural: “Of distinctively human behavior it may be said that the strictly physical environment is so incorporated in a cultural environment that our interactions with the former, the problems that arise with reference to it, and our ways of dealing with these problems, are profoundly affected by incorporation of the physical environment in the cultural.”³⁶

Given that man is social by nature, interactions with others in the environment present human beings with situations that do not have biological solutions. The

³⁴ Dewey, *Logic*, 48.

³⁵ Dewey, *Logic*, 48.

³⁶ Dewey, *Logic*, 49.

solutions that are required originate from the customs, traditions, and values that have impacted human beings through interactions with others. Human beings' actions, decisions, and behaviors are deeply influenced by their cultures, traditions, and institutions. Thus, human beings are more social than other animals, such as a bee or an ant, because human beings' environments are inherited from previous cultures.

According to Dewey, even humans' neuro-muscular structures are modified and develop from the natural environment. Dewey discusses man and his relationship to his cultural environment in Chapter III of his *Logic*:

Man, as Aristotle remarked, is a *social* animal. This fact introduces him into situations and originates problems and ways of solving them that have no precedent upon the organic biological level. For man is social in another sense than the bee and ant, since his activities are encompassed in an environment that is culturally transmitted, so that what man does and how he acts, is determined not by organic structure and physical heredity alone but by the influence of cultural heredity, embedded in traditions, institutions, customs and the purposes and beliefs they both carry and inspire. Even the neuro-muscular structures of individuals are modified through the influence of the cultural environment upon the activities performed.³⁷

Finally, Dewey writes that any theory that incorporates a naturalistic element must account for how human beings differ so markedly from other animals. Humans have such different activities and operations that demarcate them so starkly from other non-human creatures. Dewey argues in Chapter III of his *Logic* that the development of language out of prior biological activities is what led to this demarcation. Consider how Dewey expresses this in the following text:

Any theory that rests upon a naturalistic postulate must face the problem of the extraordinary differences that mark off the activities and achievements of human beings from those of other biological forms. It is these differences that have led to the idea that man is completely separated from other animals by properties that come from

³⁷ Dewey, *Logic*, 49.

a non-natural source. The conception to be developed in the present chapter is that the development of language (in its widest sense) out of prior biological activities is, in its connection with wider cultural forces, the key to this transformation. The problem, so viewed, is not the problem of the transition of organic behavior into something wholly discontinuous with it—as is the case when, for example, Reason, Intuition and the *A priori* are appealed to for explanation of the difference. It is a special form of the general problem of continuity of change and the emergence of new modes of activity—the problem of development at any level.³⁸

Furthermore, this passage reveals that there is a factor other than biology that demarcates humans from non-humans. That is to say, an interpretation of the origins of humans that is strictly evolutionary, meaning that they evolved from non-human animals, could not account for this other factor (language) that differentiate humans from animals that are not human. This other factor, language, prevents the possibility of a simple classification of the origins of humans. The problem that arises with respect to the development of something non-natural out of the natural is similar to trying to account for development at whenever it takes place—that is, there is continuity between different levels that seem unaccountable. Trying to account for the development of language out of biological processes is difficult because the development that takes place is hard to explain.

³⁸ Dewey, *Logic*, 49-50.

CHAPTER IV

BROWNING ON DEWEY

In Chapter II of his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*, Tom Burke provides an intensive discussion on Dewey's notion of a situation and how this relates to the Dewey-Russell debate on logic. Burke's account of Dewey's notion of a situation has been criticized by some scholars. In this book, Burke's intention is to defend Dewey against many criticisms brought forth by Russell against Dewey's logical theory. Burke's intention, then, is not to assist Russell in furthering the criticisms against Dewey. Rather, Burke's intention is to capture most accurately Dewey's writings.

A presentation delivered by Douglas Browning entitled "Some Remarks on Burke's *Dewey's New Logic*" discusses Burke's account of a situation that he provides in Chapter II of his book, and proceeds to develop an alternative account. Browning's interpretation provides a way of escaping several of the criticisms that Russell targets at Dewey. Although Burke's understanding does rescue Dewey from a number of the criticisms brought forth against him by Russell, the criticisms of Russell's interpretation of Dewey cannot be revealed through Burke's understanding alone. To show this, we need Browning's understanding to reveal these consequences. In addition to rescuing Dewey of some of Russell's arguments, Browning's discussion of Dewey's account of a situation appears more in accordance with Dewey's actual writings. In other words, the discussion of a situation that Dewey provides parallels Browning's account more than it does Burke's.

In discussing Browning's development of situations, I trust to show that the role of the situation in Dewey's logical theory is quite complex and has many subtle intricacies. Russell, unfortunately, moved too forcefully and swiftly through his discussion and presentation of Dewey's logical writings, and, as a result, failed to capture a clear understanding of Dewey's theory of inquiry.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the criticisms that Russell raised against Dewey's account of situations. Afterwards, I will formulate Browning's criticisms of Burke's understanding of the role of situations in Dewey's work and, finally, show how Browning's discussion of a situation can rescue Dewey from some of Russell's criticisms against him. My intention is to use Browning's notion of a situation to reveal how Russell's understanding of Dewey's view of situations is not quite accurate. By doing this, I will show that the role of situations in Dewey's logic can only be understood from a perspective that emphasizes them as they are had and felt and cannot be defined.¹

4.1 Russell's Interpretation of Dewey's Notion of a Situation

The debate that took place between Dewey and Russell came from Russell's side in which he targeted many criticisms against Dewey. In his book (1994), Burke attempts to defend Dewey against these criticisms brought forth by Russell. Burke's task is to sort through the confusions and misinterpretations brought forth by Russell. Russell claims

¹ I will not propose to define a situation, as Burke does. Instead, I will present Dewey's discussion of a situation. I intend to show that the role of the situation in Dewey's logical theory is intricate insofar as it cannot be defined or placed within a set of boundaries. It is a subtle and complex notion, and the farthest that Dewey goes is describing what a situation is, but never proposing a definition of any sorts. I hope to restore this understanding of Dewey's discussion of situations.

that Dewey's embracement of a holism commits him to the conclusion that a situation must embrace no less than the whole universe. Russell, however, did not fully capture Dewey's notion of a situation. Consequently, in his book (1994), Burke turns to the debate that took place between Dewey and Russell, and examines more closely what he thinks Dewey's notion of a situation is, how Russell interpreted Dewey, and where Russell went wrong in coming to an understanding of Dewey's notion of a situation. In this section, I will turn to the criticisms that Russell targeted against Dewey's account of situations.

Russell claimed that the roots of Dewey's notion of a situation stemmed from Hegel's thought. Hegel's holism, Russell argued, serves as a strong influence on Dewey's notion of a situation.² Now, let's consider Russell's criticisms of Dewey's notion of a situation. As Burke notes, Russell's criticisms of Dewey that he is committed to a holism is not a strong argument.³ Russell argues that Dewey's insistence upon continuity and his characterization of situations as "qualified existential wholes" commits him to the view that "a 'situation' can embrace less than the whole universe."⁴ Russell's argument, as Burke reads it, proceeds thus:

According to Dewey,

² There is currently a debate taking place over the extent to which Dewey was influenced by Hegel. Burke argues that Dewey appears to have been influenced by Hegel in his youth. However, according to Burke, Dewey does not appear to have been influenced by Hegel while the debate was taking place between Dewey and Russell. In a passage in which Dewey is defending himself against Russell, Dewey appears to admit to Hegel leaving a permanent impact on his thought. Dewey writes: "Mr. Dewey admits not only that he was once an Hegelian but that Hegel left a permanent deposit in his thought..." John Dewey, "Experience, Knowledge, and Value," 544.

³ Burke expresses his position as follows: "Russell's actual argument that it commits Dewey to a some sort of holism is both sketchy and brief" (Burke, p. 32).

⁴ Russell, "Dewey's New *Logic*," 139-140.

I. Situations are qualified existential wholes (Premise)

II. Inquiry is continuous throughout life (Premise)

Therefore, a situation can embrace no less than the whole universe (Conclusion).

Burke's interpretation of Russell's argument is presented such that Russell argues that the conclusion (a situation can embrace no less than the whole universe) necessarily follows from the premises. The remainder of Russell's arguments consists of arguing against the supposed conclusions of Dewey's views.

4.2 Burke's and Dewey's Responses to Russell's Interpretation of Dewey's Account of Situations

Dewey formulated a retort to Russell's criticisms, and phrased it in the following way:

Mr. Dewey admits not only that he was once an Hegelian but that Hegel left a permanent deposit in his thought; Hegel was a thoroughgoing holist; therefore, Dewey uses "situation" in a holistic sense. I leave it to Mr. Russell as a formal logician to decide what he would say to anyone who presented this argument in any other context. The following argument answers perhaps more to Mr. Russell's idea of inductive reasoning. British philosophy is analytic; Dewey not only leans to the Continental synthetic tendency but has vigorously criticized British analytic thought; therefore, his identification of an experience with a situation commits him to "holism."⁵

Dewey's formulation of Russell's argument reveals the extent to which Dewey disagreed with Russell's discussion of his arguments. In this passage, Dewey attempts to provide a reconstruction of Russell's argument. Russell, as Dewey makes clear in this passage, makes a lot of sweeping generalizations about Dewey's views. Russell argues from the fact that since situations may be a part of the whole universe to the conclusion that all situations are a part of the whole universe. Dewey does not make this claim anywhere

⁵ Dewey, "Experience, Knowledge, and Value," 544-545.

throughout his writings. Russell makes a universal generalization (situations are concerned with the whole universe) based upon only a possible existential instantiation (some situations are concerned with the whole universe).

Burke provides the following reconstruction of Russell's argument:

- (I) A situation is an instance of disequilibrium in the interactions between an organism and its environment.
- (II) A situation instigates a process of inquiry, given the organism/environment system's impetus to maintain itself.
- (III) Any action, fact, entity, or event which is relevant as such to the course of this inquiry is part of the situation.
- (IV) Any action, fact, entity, event, or process exists or occurs in a single continuum with, and hence is relevant as such to the causal history of, any other action, fact, entity, event, or process. From this, according to Russell, it follows that:
- (V) Any action, fact, entity, event, or process in the universe is part of the situation.⁶

Premise (I), Burke claims, is Dewey's definition of a situation. According to premise (II), situations are concerned with inquiry, once an indeterminate situation arises. There is a need to maintain a balance between the organism and its environment. The next premise, (III), is nowhere discussed in Dewey's writings, but is a plausible premise given Dewey's other views. Burke argues that Russell interprets premise (IV) from Dewey's insistence upon continuity throughout his writings. Finally, premise (V) supposedly follows from premises one through four.

⁶ This argument is taken directly from Burke (1994), p. 34.

Burke tries to recover Dewey from Russell's argument by appealing to the boundedness of experience. He wants to show that situations are bounded by the reach and scope of a living creature's experience. Dewey discusses situations as follows: "The argument here will be that situations are bounded by the reach, scope, or content of a living creature's experience, where the problem in the end is to explain 'experience as situated', not 'situations as experienced'."⁷ If Burke can show this, then he will provide a plausible counter-argument to Russell's conclusion that "situations are concerned with the entire universe." Doing this will recover Dewey from Russell's primary criticisms of his views.

A place where Dewey discusses what binds a situation is in his "Common Sense and Scientific Inquiry" in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938). Here, Dewey is discussing that the starting point for modern philosophy is to start with a dualism between knowledge and the object of knowledge. Modern philosophy singles an object or event out from its environing context and analyzes it as its primary subject-matter.⁸ It focuses on a single object or event in isolation and draws a distinction between the knowledge of the object and the environing context. In the following passage, Dewey discusses the dualisms of knowledge that some philosophies take:

It is only when an object of focal observation is regarded as an object of knowledge in isolation that there arises the notion that there are two kinds of knowledge, and two kinds of objects of knowledge, so opposed to each other that philosophy must either choose which is "real" or find some way of reconciling the respective "realities."⁹

⁷ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 37.

⁸ Dewey, *Logic*, 66-67.

⁹ Dewey, *Logic*, 73.

For Dewey, however, it is a mistake to draw such a distinction. Objects and events can only be understood within the environing context of some particular situation. If one draws distinctions between knowledge of objects and events and their environments, one will neglect to capture the situation as a unique qualitative whole. Consider the following passage by Dewey in which he discusses the dualisms drawn between objects and events:

When it is seen that in common sense inquiry there is no attempt made to know the object or event as *such* but only to determine what it signifies with respect to the way in which the entire situation should be dealt with, the opposition and conflict do not arise. The object or event in question is perceived as part of the environing world, not in and by itself; it is rightly (validly) perceived if and when it acts as clew and guide in use-enjoyment. We live and act in connection with the existing environment, not in connection with isolated objects, even though a singular thing may be crucially significant in deciding how to respond to total environment.¹⁰

Dewey notes that what makes a situation a whole is an immediately pervading *quality*. This pervasive quality cannot be understood solely from an emotional, mentalistic, or feeling-based standpoint.¹¹ Rather, these have to be understood in relation to the complete qualitative situation that is taking place.¹² This quality is what binds situations together. It is that quality which comprises the situation and makes it the unique qualitative whole that it is. Consider the following text by Dewey in support of this: “The pervasively qualitative is not only that which binds all constituents into a whole but it is also unique; it constitutes in each situation an *individual* situation, indivisible and unduplicable.”¹³ Any distinctions that take place take place only within the situation and not apart from it. They can only be understood within the unique

¹⁰ Dewey, *Logic*, 73.

¹¹ Dewey, *Logic*, 73.

¹² Dewey, *Logic*, 74.

¹³ Dewey, *Logic*, 74.

qualitative situation as a whole. Dewey discusses distinctions and their relationship to situations in the following passage: “Distinctions and relations are instituted *within* a situation; *they* are recurrent and repeatable in different situations.”¹⁴

In order to go about showing that situations are not concerned with the entire universe (but rather with the pervasive qualitative aspects of each situation), Burke proposes to reexamine premises (I) - (V). Examining these premises will allow for an assessment of the position that Russell attributes to Dewey. If Burke can reveal flaws in Russell’s interpretation, then it will allow us to conclude that the premises and conclusions that he attributes to Dewey are in fact faulty. Thus, we could conclude that Russell’s position on and characterization of Dewey is untenable.

Burke examines Dewey’s concept of continuity in order to undermine an incorrect reading of premise (III). Burke begins with this premise, as this is where Russell’s interpretation of Dewey’s concept of continuity comes into play. It is from Dewey’s concept of continuity that Russell draws various conclusions, all of which led to the final conclusion, which is impossible to maintain. Next, he will utilize Dewey’s definition of a situation as a disequilibrium in order to argue that his own stance avoids the holism/atomism debate rather than being seriously injured by it.

With respect to premise (IV), this relies upon premise (III), the continuity of inquiry. Burke states that premise (IV) misrepresents the continuity of inquiry in this passage: “Premise (IV), as stated, is an attempt to make explicit what Russell only hints

¹⁴ Dewey, *Logic*, 74.

at, and it does not adequately express Dewey's notion of continuity."¹⁵ Consequently, in order to undermine Russell's argument, Burke proposes to examine what 'continuity of inquiry' means for Dewey. Burke argues that Dewey's notion of continuity is so broad that it can be confusing. He mentions, however, that it would be hasty to conclude that there is not a single idea that Dewey is striving towards in his work. There must be a beginning and end to Dewey's continuity of inquiry rather than a never-ending continuity.

Burke is certainly correct in pointing out that Dewey's notion of continuity is broad, but this in itself does not downplay it enough to characterize it as confusing. In Chapter II of his book, Burke makes significant progress into categorizing the different senses in which Dewey uses the term 'continuity' and this alone shows that there may be some orderliness to Dewey's usage of this term. Furthermore, the point that we should keep in mind is that we may be searching in the wrong direction if we try to flesh out a single characterization of continuity of inquiry in Dewey's writings without examining the different types of continuity first.

Perhaps one solution to working out a conception of Dewey's notion of continuity is by trying to differentiate these different types of continuity that Dewey distinguishes and trying to develop an account of each one. For instance, we can begin by discussing developmental continuity and formulating an account of this. Then, we

¹⁵ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 37.

can develop an account of temporal continuity, for instance, and provide an exegesis of this.

Burke takes an approach similar to this in his book, but he proposes the following: “It would in fact be worthwhile to formulate a concept of continuity which is not limited to any one of the special cases so far mentioned but rather is general enough to cover all of them.”¹⁶ Then, Burke proposes a general principle of Dewey’s notion of continuity of inquiry. This approach is certainly worthwhile and significant, but I think instead we should develop an account of each type first and then propose a general principle based upon the individual types we develop.

If we took this approach, then we would be able to show that Russell’s interpretation of Dewey’s concept of continuity has not been adequately analyzed. Russell begins with a general concept of continuity and doesn’t analyze this concept relative to Dewey’s different types. Thus, he proposes a general definition that functions over and above the individual types that comprise continuity.

4.3 Douglas Browning’s Considerations of Burke’s Dewey’s New Logic: A Reply to Russell

In a presentation entitled “Some Remarks on Burke’s *Dewey’s New Logic*,” Browning provides a thorough consideration of some of the remarks Burke provides in his book *Dewey’s New Logic*. A large portion of Browning’s considerations have to deal with Burke’s discussion of Dewey’s view of situations. I will begin by discussing

¹⁶ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 40.

Browning's criticisms of Burke's account of Dewey's notion of a situation. I will use this understanding of a situation to discuss how Russell interprets Dewey's arguments, and show how (i) Russell's interpretation is in conflict with how processes take place within the world and (ii) is formulated in a way that is not consistent with Dewey's premises (both of which Russell grants).

One of Browning's primary criticisms of Burke's approach is that his characterization derives from his background theory, which he then uses to explain concepts in his logic. This is the mistake of improper importation. The mistake of improper importation occurs when concepts or assumptions which belong to a background theory are imported into a logical theory. These assumptions or concepts may be epistemological, metaphysical, or psychological. Any logical theory must not import any assumptions or concepts which belong to a background theory. The logician's perspective is concerned only with the theoretical consideration of subject-matter in terms of how the objects or elements considered fit into a logical theory. Any other considerations that may fit into a background theory, such as metaphysical or psychological, are not appropriate subject-matter for the logician.

The reason Browning characterizes this as a mistake of improper importation has to do with the role of situations in Dewey's work. First-order inquiries, or those from an inquiring agent's perspective, have to deal with inquiring into situations as they are lived and had. Situations provide the context and subject-matter for those inquiries. Second-order inquiries, or those from a logician's perspective, are concerned with inquiry into inquiry insofar as these are the 'facts' that contribute to identifying and characterizing

logical forms. After a logical theory has been constructed, it is true that one may take a detached perspective upon the theory and its applications, but, as Browning states, “nothing in this serves to transform one’s understanding of what situations or inquiries are by bringing to bear some external picture of how situations arise, how they are bounded in a universe of such things as tides, stars, and cars, and why those which are indeterminate serve to evoke the course of reflective thinking which we have identified as inquiries.”¹⁷

As I understand Browning’s criticism, Burke does precisely this—he takes a reflective stance, the logician’s perspective, on situations as he incorporates them into his logical theory. In other words, he discusses the nature of a situation from a detached perspective, and incorporates his discussion into his interpretations of Dewey’s views. Burke is turning situations into an object of cognition, meaning that he is speaking of a situation as though it is an object to be reflected upon. Situations always occur in a non-cognitive context, by which I mean that they are lived and experienced, and never rationalized. By turning situations into an object of cognition, Burke is introducing something from a background theory into his logical works.

Burke defines a situation, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, in the following way: “Situations, occurring in the ongoing activities of some given organism/environment system, are instances or episodes (or ‘fields’) of disequilibrium, instability, imbalance, disintegration, disturbance, dysfunction, breakdown, etc.”¹⁸ He

¹⁷ Browning, “Some Remarks on Burke’s *Dewey’s New Logic*,” 12.

¹⁸ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 22.

also says the following with respect to situations: “Such a localized instance of disequilibrium is what Dewey means by a situation.”¹⁹

Contrary to Burke’s claim, Browning argues that Dewey does not discuss a situation in such a manner, not even as a part of his background theory. In other words, Browning’s argument is that Dewey did not view situations as consisting of a sense of disequilibrium or precariousness. Instead, this was Dewey’s understanding of an indeterminate situation, that is, only one kind of a situation. Browning notes it is true that, for Dewey, determinate situations may contain some indeterminateness, but they are not characterized entirely by this. Burke’s error, Browning argues, is defining a ‘situation’ in this way, a view which Dewey did not endorse.

Dewey introduces the notion of a situation in his *Logic*. It is taken as a primitive notion, meaning that it does not appeal to any sort of theory. Dewey provides the following discussion of a situation:

I begin the discussion by introducing and explaining the denotative force of the word *situation*. Its import may perhaps be most readily indicated by means of a preliminary negative statement. What is designated by the word “situation” is *not* a single object or event or set of objects and events. For we never experience or form judgments about objects and events in isolation, but only in connection with a contextual whole.²⁰

Consider this passage as well:

every resolved situation which is the terminal state of inquiry exists directly as it is experienced. It is a qualitative individual situation in which are directly incorporated and absorbed the results of the mediating processes of inquiry. As an existential situation it is had as the consummation and fulfillment of the operation of inquiry....the experienced situation as a qualitative situation is not an object or set of objects. It is just the qualitative situation which it is. It can be referred to, taken and

¹⁹ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 29.

²⁰ Dewey, *Logic*, 72.

used in subsequent inquiries, and then it presents itself as an object or ordered set of objects. But to treat it as an object involves confusion of two things which are experientially different: viz., an object of cognition and a situation that is non-cognitively had.²¹

For Dewey, situations are undergone from an experiential standpoint. They can only be understood in terms of how they are felt as a qualitative whole. Situations cannot be removed from the context of the situation and be made into an object of cognition.

4.4 An Evaluation of Russell's Dewey Based on Browning's Dewey

Now that we (Browning and myself) have criticized Burke's view of Dewey on situations, how does this affect his refutation of Russell? If Burke is wrong about Dewey, then is Russell free from problems? I will show that Browning's understanding of situations reveals many errors in Russell's criticisms of Dewey that Burke's interpretation does not quite capture. I will presuppose the reading of a situation provided by Browning and myself. I think that Russell's argument is not a strong argument, for acceptance of it leads to conflicting states of affairs with how things take place in the world. I will argue that there is faulty reasoning in Russell's interpretation of Dewey. Finally, I will present another argument, which presupposes this same reading of a situation for Dewey, which shows that Russell attempts to define a situation. Situations, for Dewey, cannot be defined.

Let's suppose that it is true that the conclusion – a situation can embrace no less than the whole universe – does follow from the above premises – (i) situations are qualified existential wholes and (ii) inquiry is continuous throughout life. According to Dewey, every situation has its unique qualitative aspect. It is unlike any other situation,

²¹ Dewey, *Logic*, 525-526.

and cannot be compared or related to another. According to premise (i), every situation is unique (situations are qualified existential wholes). Thus, when my car breaks down and can't run, it is a different situation than when my neighbor's car breaks down and can't run. My car has factors that caused it to break down, which are factors independent of what is taking place in my neighbor's car. Similarly, my neighbor's car has unique aspects that caused it to break down, which operate independently of the functioning of my car, because, presumably, the two cars are different cars. There are situational factors that depend upon the *context*.

Russell argues in premise (ii) that inquiry is continuous throughout life, by which he means there is continuity between all objects and events that have a bearing upon each situation. In other words, every situation is effected by all other surrounding objects and events. Since inquiry is continuous throughout, meaning that all objects and events interact with one another, Russell argues that situations are concerned with everything in the entire universe. This conclusion supposedly follows from the interconnectedness of all objects and events in relation to each situation.

Let's go back to my original example and consider how this argument holds up. When I am driving my car and it breaks down, there are many factors that contribute to this, including (possibly) the coolant level, the amount of oil in the car, and the functioning of the motor. All of these factors are important in relation to the functioning of my car. If inquiry is continuous throughout life, then it follows that such things as the temperature of the ocean on a given day has any effect on the functioning of my car. The temperature of the ocean on a given day is important in relation to such things as the

possibility of a fisherman catching a fish, the likelihood of seeing people swimming in it, and the population of fish.

While my car may be effected by the temperature of the air outside and (perhaps) even the temperature of the ocean, which could be over hundreds of miles (close to thousands) from my current location, I find it hard to believe that the temperature of the ocean on a given day has any effect on the oil level of my car, the coolant level, or the functioning of the motor. According to Russell, everything would effect the functioning of my car, including the boy running in the yard next door, the amount of chemical research being produced in a single laboratory during a given day, and so forth. This follows since Russell claims that all objects and events are interrelated and effect each situation.

The question that needs to be considered here in relation to Russell's argument is, does the relation effect the functioning of my car in any significant way? Two points to consider in raising this question are the following: (i) we do not have the instruments that could measure this impact that Russell is claiming situations have and (ii) if we could, it wouldn't make any difference. In considering the first point, the impact that Russell is claiming that inquiry has, namely, all objects and events are effected by any given situation is not something that could ever conceivably be determined. In short, there is no method or instrument that could measure the accuracy of such a claim. The second point is simply that it wouldn't make any difference if we could measure such a claim, for most effects from one situation would not make any significant practical difference on other situations taking place. Russell's point is a theoretical point about

inquiry, and it neglects to consider the fact that, even if his point is accurate, it would not make any difference in how we experience these effects or how we perceive them.

Having considered this question, a boy running through the yard, the amount of chemical research being produced in a laboratory during a given day, and the temperature of the ocean do not seem to have any bearing on the amount of oil in my car (which could cause it to breakdown). Thus, Russell's premises lead to conclusions that are in conflict with the way the world actually is. For instance, Russell's premises lead to the conclusion that a boy running through a yard on a given day would effect the functioning of my car.

However, the activities a boy is performing on a yard during a given day would seem to function quite independently of my car and thus have no effect on its functioning. Since the argument that I've presented is the one that Russell thinks Dewey holds, then does that mean that Dewey is wrong? In other words, will I be revealing a flaw in Dewey's reasoning by showing that Russell's interpretation of Dewey is in conflict with how things occur in the actual world? My reply is that I won't. I've attempted to show that Russell's interpretation of Dewey leads to consequences that are in conflict with things in the actual world. Consequently, by showing that Russell's argument has conflicting aspects, I will be showing that Russell's interpretation is faulty, not Dewey's actual views.

Furthermore, I would like to criticize Russell's argument on the grounds that his conclusion (a situation can embrace no less than the whole universe) is based on false assumptions about Dewey's view. Situations are unique. There are no universal traits

across situations; they all have their own distinct, incomparable, qualitative and situational factors that contribute to making it the situation that it is. Although certain situations may have things in common with others, there are no universal traits that define a situation.

Situations cannot be defined. They cannot be given a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that serve to set limits on them. This is the very premise that Russell concedes constitutes a situation for Dewey (premise I in his argument). If this is true, then his conclusion could not coalesce with this premise. His conclusion would put a universal quantification on a situation, namely, that *every* situation *must* be concerned with the *entire* universe, meaning that all situations are affected by all other objects and events.

This, however, is not consistent with premise (I), which he grants as Dewey's premise. According to this premise, situations have to have certain traits that are universal (they are concerned with all objects and events); however, situations, by Dewey's very discussion of them, are unique. They differ in fundamental ways from every other situation, and they cannot be captured by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that serve to define them. However, this is what Russell is doing by arguing for this conclusion; he is defining situations by requiring that they be concerned with all objects and events. Russell fails to understand that situations for Dewey can only be understood as contextual wholes.

CHAPTER V

DETERS ON DEWEY

Dewey's logical theory has many unique aspects. His logic grew in opposition to many of the prominent logics that were influential during his day. This is a result of the fact that the prominent logics were an extension of the Aristotelian theory. Dewey was strongly opposed to the Aristotelian claim that there can be change in the subject-matter of logic without change in the logical forms. This was a common assumption in many of the theories of Dewey's time-period. He presents a contrary view to the Aristotelian picture. Contrary to the view that logical forms do not change when there is a change in the subject-matter of logic, Dewey proposes, "The more adequate that logic was in its own day, the less fitted is it to form the framework of present logical theory."¹ Under Dewey's account, logical forms can change with the change in subject-matter. Since the objects of inquiry since Aristotle's time have changed, the logical forms that arise from the subject-matter will change. This follows from his view that logical forms can change with a change in the subject-matter.

Dewey, as a consequence, introduced a new theory that differed from the Aristotelian doctrine. For Dewey, logic was a theory of inquiry. Rather than basing logic on the subject-predicate analysis of linguistic statements, Dewey argued that it was concerned with everyday subject-matter and this material could not be translated into a symbolic language. Furthermore, certain notions in Dewey's theory, including

¹ Dewey, *Logic*, 82.

warranted assertibility, propositions, and judgments, are different from or non-existent in other logical theories.

In this chapter, I will present a general overview of Dewey's logical theory based on the conclusions that I have drawn in previous chapters. My intention will be to emphasize the contextual and situational factors in Dewey's theory of inquiry, and, most importantly, present it as an account that emphasizes the way inquiry is influenced by each organism's cultural and experiential backgrounds. Emphasizing it in this way will reveal the extent to which organisms experience the world in their own unique ways, and how organisms are seriously influenced by not only biology but other factors as well.

5.1 Evolution in Dewey

Dewey devoted considerable space to discussing biological and evolutionary matters. He was interested in evolution not only because he thought it would impact future sciences but also since it was developed in opposition to the traditional ancient Greek picture. The ancient Greek account regarded nature as being concerned with finality. Change and origin were treated as signs of defects.

Darwin's publication of the "Origin of Species" presented a philosophy of nature that challenged the traditional view. The Darwinian account states that there is no causal preordained force that can create nature, plants and animals, and the human species. His account regarded all organic adaptations as a result of constant variation. All variations that are harmful in the struggle for existence are eliminated.

Darwin's book, Dewey writes, caused an outcry from the theological side. The real issues at stake with Darwin's publication were veiled by this theological clamor.

Anti-Darwinians presented the picture that the debate was between science, on the one hand, and religion, on the other. Darwin realized that the primary issue lay within science itself. Fearing the label of “crazy” by his scientific peers, Darwin hesitated to publish his book for two decades.

Dewey identifies two effects of the Darwinian mode of thinking. First, an attempt is being made to coalesce our traditional philosophical outlooks with the Darwinian picture of nature. Secondly, there is an emergence of a type of philosophical outlook, distinct from science, which opens up a reality that science can never access. It examines how things are experienced. The introduction of this new philosophical outlook has resulted in an outcry from many philosophies and religions.

In his *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, Dewey does not take a committed stance on Darwin’s theory of evolution. Even though he explores evolution from a historical perspective, Dewey never states how evolution relates to his entire philosophy or theory of inquiry. Despite the fact that Dewey does not take a committal position with respect to evolution, the view that most characterizes his position is that he regarded evolution as a science that has challenged many traditional perspectives on nature. Furthermore, he regards it as a science that may have an impact on future developments in science and philosophies of nature.

5.2 The Subject-Matter of Logic

Dewey draws a distinction between the ultimate subject-matter of logic and its proximate subject-matter. The latter is concerned with the relations that hold between propositions, such as affirmation-negation, particular-general, etc. The proximate

subject-matter of logic deals with the words, *is*, *is-not*, *if-then*, *only*, and so forth. It is concerned with, in part, statements and their logical connectives.

The ultimate subject-matter of logic deals with such questions as, do logical forms have independent existence apart from any subject-matter? Do logical forms only arise from everyday subject-matter? When it comes to questions concerning the proximate subject-matter of logic, there is some confidence in the answers, but nothing is complete. However, questions regarding the ultimate subject-matter of logic are filled with controversy.

The position that Dewey develops in his *Logic* is that logical forms arise within the process of inquiry, and are directed towards the control of inquiry in order to establish a warrantably assertible judgment.² This conception not only implies that logical forms are recognized and understood during the process of inquiry, but also that logical forms emerge from the operations that are taking place in inquiry.³ Thus, for Dewey, logical forms do not have a necessary, antecedent existence apart from any particular context. Logical forms exist in relation to some particular subject-matter from which they arise.

5.3 Dewey on Situations and the Postulate of Immediate Empiricism

Situations play an important part in the process of inquiry. A situation, for Dewey, is not something that can be singled out as an object or event. It can only be experienced as a

² Dewey, *Logic*, 10.

³ Dewey, *Logic*, 11.

contextual whole, meaning that it cannot be singled out of its environing context.

Situations can only be experienced as they are had in an experiential situation.

A situation is experienced as an immediately pervading whole. They are only experienced as they are felt. By saying that situations are felt, it does not mean to indicate that they are single events that can be taken out of their environing context. Furthermore, by stating that it is felt, it is not meant to indicate that it is a feeling, emotion, or mental state. Rather, feelings, emotions, and mental states are described within the contextual situation as a whole. Furthermore, this quality that pervades situations is that which binds situations into a whole, meaning that it composes all of the elements taking place within the situation into a unity. In addition, situations are not replicable. Each situation can only be understood as the unique qualitative situation that it is, and cannot be compared or reduplicated. Discourse is sensible only with reference to a situation, and cannot be understood outside of one.

In discussing situations, Dewey is careful to distinguish the different types of situations that take place during the process of inquiry. These situations, for Dewey, include the indeterminate situation, problematic situation, and determinate situation. These are all different phases of the process of inquiry, and need to be sharply distinguished.

Dewey notes that inquiry and questioning are nearly synonymous in meaning, given their relatedness. He relates inquiry to questioning by stating that when we inquire into something, we are in the process of questioning it. The indeterminate situation is what is taking place when this questioning occurs. The doubt that comes with

questioning is what characterizes the indeterminate situation. Indeterminate situations are characterized by doubt, confusion, and uncertainty. The doubtfulness that occurs in each situation is not the same, universal doubt that pervades all situations. Rather, the doubt that takes place is unique to the individual situation.

The situation as a whole has the traits of doubt, confusion, and uncertainty. The doubt that arises is a feature of the situation. Dewey refers to personal doubts taking place within an inquirer's mind that are not originated from and relative to an existential situation as 'pathological'. Situations cannot be restored by restoring personal states of mind. By stating this, Dewey is conveying the idea that the inquirer's mind that is undergoing the situation is not the source of the doubtfulness that pervades the indeterminate situation.

Rather, it is the very situation that comprises the doubtfulness and confusion taking place. Thus, trying to restore an indeterminate situation (one pervaded with doubt and uncertainty) into a determinate one (a state of equilibrium) by trying to resolve the inquirer's personal mind is an error and the situation can, however, only be resolved by restoring conditions of the underlying existential situation. Dewey expresses this in Chapter VI of his *Logic* as follows:

The habit of disposing of the doubtful as if it belonged only to *us* rather than to the existential situation in which we are caught and implicated is an inheritance from subjectivistic psychology. The biological antecedent conditions of an unsettled situation are involved in that state of imbalance in organic-environmental interactions which has already been described. Restoration of integration can be effected, in one case as in the other, only by operations which actually modify existing conditions, not by merely "mental" processes.⁴

⁴ Dewey, *Logic*, 110.

Dewey notes that an indeterminate situation may have been called a *problematic* situation, but he is clear to draw a sharp distinction between the two. The indeterminate situation transforms into a problematic situation when the process of inquiry is applied to it. These types of situations are not cognitive in nature. The situation as a whole is precognitive. For inquiry into something to take place, the situation must be determined to be problematic in nature. Determining that a situation is problematic does not in itself constitute the transformation of the situation into a determinate, or resolved, one. It does not carry inquiry much further.

Rather, it is only the first step in the process of working towards resolving the situation. By stating that it is a problematic situation, Dewey is not stating that it is similar to a mathematical problem in school. Dewey means that it is a step in the process of transforming the indeterminate situation into a determinate one. When a problematic situation is judged incorrectly, inquiry into the situation goes astray.

In stating that a given situation is problematic, it means nothing unless the problem has a possible solution. No problem that is recognized as completely indeterminate can be transformed into a determinate situation. The first step in resolving the situation is to recognize the various constituents of the situation which are settled.⁵ These constituents have to be observed. Taken collectively, these observed constituents together constitute “the facts of the situation.”⁶ These various facts are what compose the problem, and are the constituents of the situation which must be taken into account in order for resolution of the problem to take place.

⁵ Dewey, *Logic*, 112.

⁶ Dewey, *Logic*, 113.

By observing the factual conditions in the situation, a possible solution can be formulated based upon these. The possible solution to the problem presents itself as an *idea*. The idea is the expected consequences of what will take place if a series of operations are performed on the indeterminate situation. The facts of the case have to be subjected to observation. The more often the facts are submitted to observation, the more likely that a solution to the situation that has arisen will be conceived and instituted.

Another important aspect of Dewey's philosophy related to situations is his postulate of immediate empiricism. According to this postulate, things are what they are experienced as. In order to describe something, one must begin by examining how it is experienced. The example Dewey gives to illustrate this is a horse. If it is a horse that is to be described, then the person who is describing it, whether it is the statesman, the horse trader, or the family man, will explain how the horse is experienced for them. Even if the descriptions given by each person differ in fundamental respects, the descriptions will, nevertheless, be equally as plausible and accurate.

The postulate of immediate empiricism states that we should take as our starting-point things as they are experienced. Thus, reality could not be known solely from the perspective of an all-competent all-knower. Knowing is only one mode of experience. The primary philosophic task, from the standpoint of the postulate of immediate empiricism, is to find out how knowledge is experienced.⁷ Making the assumption that things are what they are known to be from the standpoint of someone with knowledge is

⁷ Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," 228-229.

an erroneous assumption. Such an assumption leaves out an account of how the knowledge standpoint is experienced.

5.4 The Foundations of Inquiry: Biological and Cultural

In order to fully understand Dewey's theory of inquiry, it is necessary to provide a discussion of its foundations. Dewey identifies two different foundations that guide inquiry: the biological and the cultural. Both are necessary conditions for the existence of inquiry. They are not distinct aspects that have no interaction between each other. There is a connection between them. The problems that human beings encounter grow out of their interactions with one another, and can only be resolved into determinate situations by means of their biological organs, such as eyes and ears.

The biological plays a part insofar as biological organs serve to guide humans in resolving indeterminate situations into determinate ones. Without these organs, inquiry could not be guided or operated. These organs, Dewey argues, prepare the way for inquiry to take place, as Dewey expresses in this passage: "The purpose of the following discussion is to show that biological functions and structures prepare the way for deliberate inquiry and how they foreshadow its pattern."⁸

In his account of the biological foundations of inquiry, Dewey introduces the postulate of continuity. According to this postulate, there cannot be reduction of "higher" species to that of "lower." As I understand Dewey, different types of species of animals cannot be reduced to each other. Dewey is not, then, proposing an evolutionary theory. Rather, continuity refers to something akin to the growth and development of an

⁸ Dewey, *Logic*, 30.

organism from seed to maturity. There is continuity in each organism's life from seed to maturity. This is expressed by Dewey in the following way: "The primary postulate of a naturalistic theory of logic is continuity of the lower (less complex) and the higher (more complex) activities and forms."⁹ By writing this, Dewey is arguing that the activities and forms in each organism's life exhibit continuity. There is not a break from one stage of an organism's life to that of another stage.

Furthermore, for Dewey the organism and the environment play an important role in the biological foundations of his logic. There is an integration between the organism and its environment. The organism is dependent upon its environment for its existence. Not only does the organism perform activities that assist it in survival, such as breathing and eating, but the environment assists as well, by providing food and shelter for the organism. Given that there is interaction between the organism and its environment, there is need to maintain a balance between the two. There is an internal mechanism that serves to keep the balance and harmony between the two maintained.

Not only are the foundations of inquiry biological, but they are also social. In addition to having biological features, humans also have languages and shared communities. These various activities contribute to making humans the social creatures they are. The cultural environment is so intricately interwoven with the physical environment that our interactions with it, the problems that arise from it, and our solutions to these problems are deeply influenced by our cultural environments.

⁹ Dewey, *Logic*, 30.

Aristotle remarked with respect to human beings that they are social animals. Because of this nature, humans enter situations which have no bearing on the biological. In other words, the social and cultural aspects of human beings introduce them to situations that are not significantly related to the biological level. By describing humans this way, Dewey is expressing his view that cultural conditions can affect humans without the biological also affecting them in the same situation. As a result, cultural conditions are somewhat independent of organic biological conditions, and, thus, they operate in different ways of functioning.

Humans are more social in nature than other animals, such as a bee or an ant, since humans are in an environment that is culturally transmitted. Dewey writes that even the neuro-muscular structures of human beings are influenced by cultural heredity. Most activities performed by humans, including reading, writing, and speaking, are influenced by our cultural environment. Without the cultural environment, a large majority of humans' activities could not be performed. Dewey expresses his views about the cultural and biological aspects of humans in his *Logic*:

Man, as Aristotle remarked, is a *social* animal. This fact introduces him into situations and originates problems and ways of solving them that have no precedent upon the organic biological level. For man is social in another sense than the bee and ant, since his activities are encompassed in an environment that is culturally transmitted, so that what man does and how he acts, is determined not by organic structure and physical heredity alone but by the influence of cultural heredity, embedded in traditions, institutions, customs and the purposes and beliefs they both carry and inspire. Even the neuro-muscular structures of individuals are modified through the influence of the cultural environment upon the activities performed. The acquisition and understanding of language with proficiency in the arts (that are foreign to other animals than men) represent an incorporation within the physical structure of human beings of the effects of cultural conditions, an interpenetration so profound that resulting activities are as direct and seemingly "natural" as are the first reactions of an infant. To speak, to read, to exercise any art, industrial, fine or political, are instances

of modifications wrought *within* the biological organism by the cultural environment.¹⁰

5.5 Propositions, Judgments, and Warranted Assertibility

There are many factors that take place during the process of inquiry that led to the establishment of a warrantably assertible judgment. Included in the process are propositions. Propositions for Dewey are not concerned with the formal truth or falsity of a given statement or utterance. Rather, propositions serve an intermediate role in the process of inquiry, in which they contribute to bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment.

Propositions are carried through by means of symbols, and have no existential import. Furthermore, for Dewey, propositions only make sense within some particular subject-matter. They cannot be understood outside of some context of inquiry. The reason for this follows from the fact that propositions serve a role only in the context of inquiry, and do not have an antecedent, necessary existence apart from some subject-matter. Thus, propositions can only be understood within a particular context.

Judgments are concerned with the transformation of an indeterminate situation into a settled, determinate situation. Furthermore, judgments are individual in nature, meaning that they are unique in their own fundamental, qualitative natures. Every judgment, then, will differ from every other judgment, since each qualitative situation will be different from every other qualitative situation.

A judgment is about a given concrete situation. Consequently, judgments are singular in nature, insofar as they are concerned with an “individual” situation. Even

¹⁰ Dewey, *Logic*, 49.

though they are “individual” in nature, they are also universal. Given that a judgment is concerned with a particular situation, the goal of a judgment is to resolve any situation correctly so that the same problematic situation does not recur. In this sense, then, a judgment is universal insofar as it is concerned with a “once-and-for-all” judgment, stating that a situation requires a certain course of action to resolve it.¹¹ It is a judgment that is meant to satisfy the inquiry once and for all, so that the need to resolve the situation again never arises. Furthermore, the universal proposition established for some particular situation is intended to be a recourse for action should a similar situation arise again. The same universal proposition can be used as a way of resolving it.

Warranted assertibility plays a fundamental role in the outcome of inquiry. However, it is not to be substituted for, nor is it, an account of truth. In other words, it is not concerned with truth or falsity. Rather, warranted assertibility is concerned with formulating the conditions that justify a final judgment through the process of inquiry. Propositions are not concerned with the actual state of believing. Rather, they play an intermediate role in the process of the establishment of a warrantably assertible judgment. Propositions, under this account, are not concerned with formal truth-falsity. Judgments that result from the process of inquiry can be concerned with being true or false, but not the actual process of inquiry. Warranted assertibility is what results as the product of a successful inquiry.

¹¹ This differs from universal propositions, however, insofar as the latter are concerned with universal characteristics of kinds, independent of any particular situation, while judgments are universal in the sense that they are concerned with making a judgment that remains, it is “once-and-for-all.”

5.6 Inquiry and Instrumentalism

In this section, I will turn to a discussion of Dewey's account of inquiry and his instrumentalism. He discusses his account of inquiry in several of his books, but I will rely on the one he develops in his *Logic*. In addition, I will discuss why he gives the name 'instrumentalism' to his account of logic, and just what accepting instrumentalism entails. I will rely on the instrumentalism that he develops in his *Essays in Experimental Logic*.

For Dewey, inquiry consists of the transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is a determinate whole. When a problematic situation occurs that needs to be resolved, the process of inquiry is instituted to resolve this problematic situation into a determinate one. Performing this process consists of using observation and applying habits on the environment. The original indeterminate situation is "open" to the process of inquiry, meaning that there is a situation taking place that needs to be resolved and it is possible to institute inquiry on the particular situation.

In addition, the constituents that comprise the situation to make it the indeterminate situation it is are scattered. Instituting the process of inquiry, which involves employing operations on the environment, will attempt to restore these scattered constituents into a unified whole. This resulting situation is a determinate situation. The latter is one which is not only closed off, meaning that the constituents are not open for inquiry to take place, but also is finished.¹² Through the process of

¹² Dewey, *Logic*, 109.

transforming the indeterminate situation, propositions are employed intermediately in the process as means of bringing forth a warrantably assertible judgment.

The name Dewey gave his theory of inquiry is *instrumentalism*. Instrumentalism states that thinking is instrumental in terms of transforming the environment from an indeterminate situation into a determinate one. Thinking has control over the environment insofar as it can manipulate and alter its subject-matter to change the physical constitution of the environment. Instrumentalism holds that something known (a knowledge-object) can never be singled out as a single object or solitary unit. Rather, knowledge of something is surrounded by many other contextual factors occurring within the surrounding environment. These surrounding contextual factors prevent the possibility of singling knowledge out as solitary objects.

The distinctive trait of instrumentalism is that it defines thought by work done and consequences effected.¹³ Thought, or intelligence, is the name for the events and acts that make up the process of inspection for future operations performed.¹⁴ The events and actions that comprise this process are real in the sense that they are just as natural as anything encountered in ordinary experience. The process of thinking is something actually existing organisms perform. However, thought does not define their essence. Actually existing objects are defined through the efficacies of their actions, or the ends they produce.¹⁵

¹³ John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), 30.

¹⁴ Dewey, *Experimental in Logic*, 31.

¹⁵ Dewey, *Experimental in Logic*, 31.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Having shown various commentators' interpretations of Dewey, I now wish to diagnose where each has gone wrong in arriving at an understanding of Dewey's theory of inquiry. I will illustrate each commentator's (Burke and Russell) misinterpretations on a case-by-case basis. If I can show that each commentator has failed to understand some aspect of Dewey's theory of inquiry, then I will have accomplished my overarching project of showing that where commentators have gone wrong in arriving at their development of Dewey's views is that they have each failed to understand various aspects of his theory of inquiry. The misinterpretations by Burke and Russell are fundamental and problematic mistakes. By examining where they have gone wrong, I trust to add new material to the debates taking place.

In arriving at an understanding of Dewey's account of propositions and warranted assertibility, Russell misunderstands two important points of Dewey. First, Russell inserts his own theory of truth into his reading of Dewey. Russell believed in the objective truth or falsity of propositions, and he read this theory into Dewey's works. Secondly, Russell mistakes Dewey's discussion of warranted assertibility as a substitution for truth. Dewey, however, did not make such a substitution, and, in fact, devoted an article to discussing the fact that he does not substitute warranted assertibility for truth.

As illustrated in Chapter II, Russell's account of propositions regarded them as being either true or false. In other words, there is an objective fact about the matter.

Russell discusses this position in his book chapter “John Dewey” of his *A History of Western Philosophy*. He begins by arguing that declarative sentences have truth values. The sentence he considers is “Columbus crossed the ocean in 1492,” which is a true statement. As a result, “Columbus crossed the ocean in 1776” is a false statement.

Sentences are given their truth values according to their significance in the language being used. Significance, not the words in the sentences, determine the truth or falsity of a given sentence.¹ When a sentence is uttered, it expresses a belief, which is something that can be translated into a different language.² The belief that is expressed is what is true or false, depending on whether or not the belief has a relation to an objective fact in the world. Beliefs take place within an organism, but they are classified as true or false in how well they correspond to empirically, objective observed facts outside the organism. Consider Russell’s expression of this:

Such illustrations suggest objectivity in truth and falsehood: what is true (or false) is a state of the organism, but it is true (or false), in general, in virtue of occurrences outside the organism. Sometimes experimental tests are possible to determine truth and falsehood, but sometimes they are not; when they are not, the alternative nevertheless remains, and is significant.³

In examining the role of warranted assertibility in Dewey’s logical writings, Russell discusses his own account of beliefs as being concerned with truth or falsity. He states that the notion of beliefs in general is an undeniable fact – they do take place. Given that there are beliefs, the important question that this gives rise to is, Can these be divided into two classes, those that are true and those that are false? If these beliefs as a whole cannot be divided into one of these two classes, can the constituents that compose

¹ Russell, “John Dewey,” 821.

² Russell, “John Dewey,” 821.

³ Russell, “John Dewey,” 822.

the beliefs? Russell then asks, if one of these can be answered in the affirmative, is it because the belief is true insofar as it has successful or failing effects, or because there is an objective relation that holds between the belief and a fact in the world?

Russell claims that he is prepared to accept that beliefs as a whole may not be true or false – their constituents may have different truth values, some true, some false. Given that some beliefs are vague, they may fail to be true or false. Russell, however, will not grant any further claims about the truth or falsity of propositions. Thus, from the start, Russell will not begin to consider Dewey's account of warranted assertibility, which Russell seems to take as Dewey's account of truth. Instead, Russell begins by evaluating Dewey's account of warranted assertibility against the conditions that formulate his own account of truth. This is evidenced by Russell in the following passage:

I am prepared to admit that a belief as a whole may fail to be “true” or “false” because it is compounded of several, some true, and some false. I am also prepared to admit that some beliefs fail, through vagueness, to be either true or false, though others, in spite of vagueness, are either true or false. Further than this I cannot go towards agreement with Dr. Dewey.⁴

In reading his own account of truth into Dewey, Russell overlooks the point that truth does not play any role in Dewey's theory of inquiry. As I illustrated in Chapter II, propositions are neither true nor false, and neither are warrantably assertible judgments. Truth and falsity are not features of Dewey's theory of inquiry. Russell makes the mistake of assuming that, for Dewey, (I) propositions are either true or false and (II) warranted assertibility is a substitution for truth. Thus, in coming to understand

⁴ Russell, “Warranted Assertibility,” 405.

Dewey's theory of inquiry, Russell neglects to realize that truth and falsity are not features of propositions.

In Chapter III, I considered Burke's interpretation of the role of situations in Dewey's account of logic. Whereas Burke places significant emphasis on the role of evolution in Dewey's theory of inquiry, several of Dewey's writings indicate that evolution, if it plays any role at all, does not play as much of a role as Burke maintains. Although Burke provides an insightful and informative interpretation of Dewey, he does not place enough emphasis on the extent to which Dewey's philosophy as a whole is social in nature and the extent to which the postulate of immediate empiricism plays a pivotal role. Thus, Burke has failed to grasp the foundations of Dewey's account of inquiry and the starting point from which all inquiry aims.

In Chapter II of his book *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*, Burke discusses his interpretation of Dewey's account of situations. Burke characterizes Dewey's account of situations as an instance of breakdown, dysfunction, or imbalance in an "organism/environment system."⁵ Burke expresses this as follows: "Situations, occurring in the ongoing activities of some given organism/environment system, are instances or episodes (or "fields") of disequilibrium, instability, imbalance, disintegration, disturbance, dysfunction, breakdown, etc."⁶

Then, Burke attributes these characteristics of situations to any organism/environment system along the evolutionary chain. Burke continues: "No single term covers everything we would want to mention here, due to the generality of

⁵ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 22.

⁶ Burke, *Dewey's New Logic*, 22.

the terms ‘situation’ and ‘inquiry’. These terms should apply to a wide range of organism/environment systems at virtually any level of evolutionary complexity.”⁷

Thus, in writing this, Burke takes situations for Dewey as concerned with evolutionary features. Furthermore, Burke characterizes inquiry in general as concerned with evolution, for he writes: “Inquiry, in a common mentalistic sense of the term, should be viewed as an evolutionary variation on what originally appears as an innate impulse of organism/environment systems to transform situations so as to counteract such instabilities.”⁸

During his discussion of situations, Burke does not provide an examination of the social features of inquiry or the experiential aspects of the organism’s encounters. Rather, Burke discusses situations and inquiry as though they can only be understood within the context of a purely physical science. However, Dewey’s theory of the process of inquiry states that the physical sciences can only be understood in relation to the social matrices and relations taking place.

Throughout Dewey’s writings, the emphasis on the social aspects of inquiry and life is present. In his book chapter “Social Inquiry” of his *Logic*, Dewey discusses the fact that social problems are existential in their content.⁹ In other words, social problems make direct reference to the everyday experiences that are undergone in an organism’s life. As a consequence of this, Dewey writes that social problems are naturalistic, and, consequently, a branch of the natural sciences. Furthermore, inquiries undergone by the physical sciences all proceed within the confines of social matrices. These matrices can

⁷ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 22.

⁸ Burke, *Dewey’s New Logic*, 22.

⁹ Dewey, *Logic*, 481.

only be understood within the social relations that take place between organisms.

Consider how Dewey expresses this: “All inquiry proceeds within a cultural matrix which is ultimately determined by the nature of social relations. The subject-matter of physical inquiry at any time falls within a larger social field.”¹⁰ Thus, the examinations undergone by the physical sciences can only be understood with reference to the cultures and social conditions taking place during a particular time-period.

Any theory that attempts to reduce human behavior to physical causes can only be understood within the context of the social matrices and relations that hold during the time in which the inquiry is occurring. If evolution is understood as a physical science that attempts to explain phenomena (human origins), then it is subject to being understood not only as a theory about human development but also as a theory that is the product of the social relations and intelligence taking place during the time-period in which it is being studied. Thus, if evolution does play a role in Dewey’s theory of inquiry, it cannot be understood within this framework alone, and it cannot be understood entirely as a physical theory.

In addition, in discussing the importance of biology (the physical foundations of inquiry), Burke does not make any reference to the importance of the experiential aspects of situations. Dewey’s postulate of immediate empiricism stipulates that we should take our experiences as our starting point for how we undergo and understand the world. Thus, physical phenomena are not experienced as physical phenomena, but are experienced as the phenomenal features that accompany the presentation of the physical

¹⁰ Dewey, *Logic*, 481.

phenomena. They are understood through the medium of an organism's phenomenal experience of the object. Every person will have different accounts of how a given object is experienced, and each person's account of the object may differ.

Finally, in Chapter IV, I reveal the plausibility of Browning's interpretation of Burke's account of situations. Browning examines Burke's account of situations and reveals that it is not in accordance with Dewey's actual writings. Dewey discusses situations from a contextual standpoint, while Burke fails to grasp this. Burke fails to distinguish between indeterminate situations, problematic situations, and determinate situations. In doing so, Burke interprets situations for Dewey from the standpoint of indeterminate situations, which is a misinterpretation.

After examining Burke's interpretation of situations, Browning proceeds to present an alternative account. If Browning's interpretation of Dewey's account of situations is accurate, then, I argue, it has several implications on Russell's interpretation of Dewey's account of situations. In accepting Browning's interpretation, it reveals that Russell's argument is based on false assumptions about Dewey's actual views.

Russell, then, has failed to understand various aspects of Dewey's theory of inquiry. His interpretation of Dewey's account of situations is revealed to be contradictory when examined in light of Browning's interpretation of Dewey's account of situations. Since Russell's argument rests on a set of sentences (premises and conclusions) that are in conflict with the actual world, it follows that his interpretation of Dewey's argument is inaccurate.

Another error that Russell commits in examining Dewey's work is that he attempts to define situations in general – that is, he tries to formulate a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that serve to define situations. In doing so, Russell neglects to consider that situations are contextual, and can only be understood within a context. They can be discussed, cognized, and reflected upon, but never experienced in the same way in which they originally occurred. In defining situations, Russell formulates universal constraints on situations, but situations, by their very nature, are contextual and, thus, cannot be universalized. In his discussion and interpretation of Dewey, then, Russell has failed to understand the role of the situation in Dewey's account of logic.

When viewed from a historical perspective, Dewey's theory of inquiry is revolutionary. Dewey's intention to formulate a logic built around the situations that occur in everyday life brings logic away from its traditional picture as a detached discipline dealing with abstract analysis of the syntax of linguistic statements to a logic built around the analysis of how people function in their everyday life. A logic that deals with the affairs of everyday life serves the practical function of impacting people and how they relate to their environment. In other words, it has existential import.

Given this import, it is easy to see then why Dewey's logic is so noteworthy and important to current society. In and of itself, it is a theory about the way in which organisms adapt to and maintain a balance with their everyday environment. Any theory that purports to explain how people remain connected to and in balance with their environment is a theory that has the function of impacting our everyday lives. Thus, from an applicatory perspective, Dewey's theory of inquiry can be seen as important

insofar as it discusses how we arrive at judgments, how the physical sciences relate to our social institutions and relations, and how our natural and social sciences should be viewed and conducted.

One goal for this thesis was to point out a few commentators' interpretations of Dewey, and show why I disagree with them. Even more important, however, was the overarching goal of formulating an exegesis of Dewey's logical theory and subsequently uniting this exegesis into a single account. In pursuing these goals, my aim has been to show why Dewey's work is not only important but also thorough in content.

Unfortunately, Dewey's theory of inquiry has been disregarded by current logicians because of its lack of formal representation. However, it is, nevertheless, a significant body of knowledge and work that can have serious theoretical as well as applicatory significance. Dewey intended for his work to be regarded as among the very best logical doctrines developed, and I hope that I have shown throughout this thesis that it has the properties and scope to fulfill this function.

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